

# BROWNSVILLE The Herald

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2016

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75 CENTS



## RIOT IN PRISON

A brawl between rival drug gangs at an overcrowded penitentiary in northern Mexico turned into a riot Thursday, leaving 49 inmates dead and 12 injured in the country's deadliest prison melee in years.

► PAGE B8

## SPORTS



## SEASONED PLAYERS

The Falcons have brought back a solid, battle-tested group to the field this year that is led by some standout seniors. They include center midfielder Ivan Jimenez, central defender Juan Lozoya, goalkeeper Jorge Medina and forwards Eric Arellano and Gustavo Olmedo.

► PAGE B1

## LOCAL



## SAFER CROSSINGS

Bayside Drive, one of the most popular features at the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge, will temporarily close beginning in March for road construction that will make crossing much safer for ocelots.

► PAGE A2

## OBITUARIES

Narciso Gonzalo Cavazos Jr.  
Rene Alberto Ramos  
Jose Armando Gonzales  
Maria Yolanda Contreras  
Hermenegildo Garcia- Espinoza

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## POPULAR ON THE WEB

## UPGRADES

The Brownsville Public Library System is several steps closer to receiving 359 new Dell computers for both library branches this year.

[BrownsvilleHerald.com](http://BrownsvilleHerald.com)

AIM Vol. 124 | No. 224

Good Morning!  
Thank you for reading today's edition of The Brownsville Herald



# EINSTEIN CORRECT

UTRGV physicists help observe gravitational waves



PHOTOS BY BRAD DOHERTY/ THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD

**Above and below:** University of Texas Rio Grande Valley faculty, staff and students listen to a web simulcast Thursday about the detection of gravitational waves at facilities in Louisiana and Washington.

BY DANIEL A. FLORES  
STAFF WRITER

With a little help from UTRGV, scientists have detected gravitational waves, ripples through the fabric of spacetime, experimentally verifying Albert Einstein's last prediction of general relativity made a century ago.

Months of social media rumors were confirmed during a Thursday news conference, introducing a new way to observe the universe.

University of Texas Rio Grande Valley physicists, some who've worked decades on the project, are among more than 1,000 international collaborators with the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory (LIGO). The Brownsville-based research center has been home to more than 20 authors of a paper published Feb. 11 by the peer-reviewed Physical Review Letters.

"It takes a lot of people to do this," said Gabriela González, spokeswoman for the LIGO scientific



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Scientists detect Einstein's ripples in gravity.

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collaboration, during the news conference.

Last September, LIGO completed an upgrade to its pair of gravitational-wave detectors located near Livingston, Louisiana, and Hanford,

PLEASE SEE WAVES, A5

## Former LIGO director reflects on historic wave detection

BY STEVE CLARK  
STAFF WRITER

Mark W. Coles was floored when he got the news in mid-September that the Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory (LIGO) in Livingston, Louisiana, had detected gravitational waves just a few days earlier.

"Like, wow," he said. "That was it."

Coles, a National Science Foundation senior advisor and LIGO program officer, was head of the Louisiana facility in the early 2000s. He characterized the recent achievement as historic and the mood

PLEASE SEE LIGO, A5

# Educational accountability discussed in Brownsville

BY GARY LONG  
STAFF WRITER

There was little disagreement among educators at a meeting Thursday in Brownsville: Texas' system of public school student assessment and accountability needs improvement, educators said.

At a town hall meeting sponsored by District 2 State Board of Education member Ruben Cortez of Brownsville and the Brownsville Independent School District, there was a general consensus that the state's current

regimen of accountability tests puts special needs students at a disadvantage.

The meeting was one of nine "community conversations" being held across the state by the Next Generation Commission on Assessments and Accountability. The meetings are part of the roll out of House Bill 2804, the measure that requires Texas' accountability system to move an A to F rating system beginning with

PLEASE SEE HALL, A5



Keynote speaker Tina McIntyre speaks on accountability for Texas public schools at a Brownsville Independent School District town hall meeting Thursday morning in Brownsville.

MIGUEL ROBERTS/ THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD

# Zapata family suing bank

Lawsuit: Lack of measures to halt laundering

BY LAURA B. MARTINEZ  
STAFF WRITER

The family of slain U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Special Agent Jaime J. Zapata — and other victims of alleged terrorist attacks in Mexico — have filed a federal lawsuit against HSBC Holdings Inc., claiming the bank laundered billions of dollars for Mexican drug cartels.

The lawsuit alleges the drug cartels used the laundered money to fund terrorist acts that included the attack on Zapata and several other U.S. citizens in Mexico.

"HSBC's systematic and prolonged support in providing financial services and laundering billions of dollars of drug proceeds for the Sinaloa, Juarez, Los Zetas and Norte del Valle cartels proximately caused the attacks on the Victims and the injuries to Plaintiffs, including the Victims' estates, survivors and heirs," the lawsuit states.

Zapata, 32, a Brownsville native who worked for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, was killed Feb. 15, 2011, on a highway near San Luis Potosi, Mexico, in an attack by members of the Zetas drug cartel. His ICE partner, Victor Avila, was wounded in the attack.

Authorities said Zapata struggled with his assailants as they tried to drag him out of his vehicle. Zapata was shot at least three times with the bullets flying through the car window that accidentally had been cracked open. Authorities said 100 spent casings from AK-47 bullets were found at the scene.

According to the lawsuit, some of the last words Zapata uttered were, "I am going to die."

The other victims listed in the lawsuit are Lesley Enriquez Redelfs, an employee of the U.S. Consulate Office in Ciudad Juarez, and her husband, Arthur Redelfs, a detention

PLEASE SEE SUIT, A5

Abby.....	B6	Calendar.....	B7	Community.....	B7	Sports.....	B1
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High 80°  
Low 53°



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# RIO GRANDE VALLEY

## WAVES

FROM PAGE A1

Washington. On Sept. 14, both facilities recorded nearly simultaneous, historic readings.

"What was amazing about this signal is that it was exactly what you'd expect that Einstein's Theory of General Relativity would predict. (There) were two ... massive objects, like black holes, inspiraling and merging together," said David Reitze, executive director of LIGO Laboratory.

LIGO scientists documented the reverberations from the first confirmed binary black holes, two black holes caught in each other's orbit. The pair of about 150-kilometer-wide black holes, each with masses about 30 times the sun, accelerated to half the speed of light 1.3 billion years ago. They spiraled into each other, bending time and space, ultimately colliding to form a larger black hole.

"That's what we saw here," Reitze said. "It's mind-boggling."

General relativity hypothesizes accelerating masses should distort

spacetime, sending gravitational waves through the universe at the speed of light.

Each detector contains state-of-the-art laser systems built specifically to observe gravitational wave length fluctuations the diameter of an atom, and are "most precise measuring device(s) ever built," according to Reitze.

"You can't buy low-noise, high-power devices," said Volker Quetschke, UTRGV assistant professor of physics, adding LIGO was defining state-of-the-art in the field.

Lasers stable enough for the dual four-kilometer arms of the interferometer didn't exist when the project began, said Quetschke, who has worked on gravitational-wave sensing hardware since 2000. Development of LIGO technologies were research projects for professors and students, Quetschke said.

"The universities basically take the development role of the project. It is not a turn-key project. You don't go to RadioShack and say, 'I want a \$1,000,000,000 gravitational wave detector. There are a lot of small aspects.'"

UTRGV's Brownsville campus streamed the announcement live, and the event was followed by comments

from current and past university officials, as well as physicists involved in the research.

Havidán Rodríguez, UTRGV provost and vice president of academic affairs, congratulated faculty and student researchers who contributed to the achievement, and Parvinder Grewal, UTRGV College of Sciences dean, emphasized the rarity of the moment.

"Discoveries of this magnitude don't happen every day," Grewal said. "This is an exciting time for humanity, for science (and) scientists."

Grewal highlighted the collaborative nature of the project and the competitive funding record of the physics faculty, calling it comparable to any institution in the nation.

"On average, the dollars that our faculty has received over the last five years is over \$500,000 per faculty member," Grewal said. "This is impressive. I come from Ohio State University. It is the same, so I'd say we're already a research institution," referring to the physics department.

Mario Diaz, director of the Center for Gravitational Wave Astronomy, was in Washington, D.C. for the news conference and echoed Grewal's senti-

ment, calling the department one of the most competitive in Texas based on research and publication.

The center was made possible by a NASA grant in 2003, and has since brought research in cutting-edge technologies to the Valley, according to Diaz.

"I thought it was important to develop something more applied. That's the way we constructed the optics lab and we opened a line of research into lasers, optics (and) photonics — that is precisely the technology being used at LIGO."

While the discovery will likely contribute to a Nobel Prize, Diaz said the university's investment in this research has already been rewarded.

"In 2006, we hired a new faculty member to come into our center who is a radio astronomer," said Diaz, referring to Fredrick Jenet. "This same faculty member is the same one that led an initiative that attracted SpaceX to the Valley ... because he's going to be developing radio tracking systems for SpaceX spacecraft."

"I think this is a good example of things that are unforeseeable, but are based in the knowledge that you generate and develop."

## LIGO

FROM PAGE A1

around NSF on Thursday as "pretty jubilant."

"Here's the thing coming to fruition after decades of hard work and really capping the professional careers of some people that I have huge respect for, people like Ray Weiss and Kip Thorne, giants of the community," Coles said.

Weiss and Thorne were among the speakers at Thursday's NSF press conference in Washington D.C. announcing the achievement: the detection on Sept. 14, 2015, of gravitational waves set in motion 1.3 billion years ago when two massive black holes collided, merging into one.

The readings were corroborated by another LIGO facility in Hanford, Washington, which recorded the same interstellar "chirp" simultaneously, ruling out any other cause — a truck going down the highway, for instance.

Gravitational waves, predicted by Einstein a century ago, were too faint to be detected until now, with detection technology having advanced to a sufficient level. The Livingston LIGO has been upgraded to three times its initial sensitivity since Coles' tenure, making the wave detection possible.

"There's probably another factor of about three to writing out of it," he said. "At some point you'll reach enough sensitivity that you'll be able to 'see' signals everywhere. At the moment not very many things have popped up."

David Reitze, director of the LIGO Laboratory at the California Institute of Technology, said during the press conference that LIGO is the most precise measuring device ever built, capable of measuring 1/1000th the diameter of a proton.

"If we were trying to measure the distance between the sun and the nearest star, LIGO would be capable of measuring that to the width of a human hair, over three and a quarter light years," Reitze said. "LIGO takes these ripples in space-time and records them on a photo detector. You can actually

hear them. It's the first time the universe has spoken to us through gravitational waves."

Coles said, "It's certainly a brand new way of looking at the sky. I think another analogy might be the advent of radio astronomy."

He praised the important role the Center for Gravitational Wave Astronomy at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley's Brownsville campus played in helping advance LIGO technology to the current level.

The center's team conducted data analysis and simulations to determine how gravitational wave signals would appear so LIGO physicists would know what to look for, he said. The UTRGV team also spent time in Louisiana helping fine tune LIGO's instruments, Coles said.

As for what it all means for the rest of regular folks, non-physicists going about their lives, Coles recounted what he used to tell his parents when they wondered what all the fuss was about.

"The answer is still that we do this because it's curiosity driven," Coles said.

That said, experience has shown that this kind of science winds up attracting and training young people for careers in industry "that we never dreamed of," he said.

It also spawns major advancements in technology. One example is frequency stabilization technology developed in the course of inventing LIGO that today is used everywhere in the superconductor-fabrication industry, Coles said.

Training youth and advancing technology work together to spur innovation and, as a result, economic development, he said.

"The U.S. is a powerful economy because it's innovative," Coles said. "It's the best in the world in terms of implementing innovation."

But that's just icing on the cake.

"Fundamentally this is curiosity-driven science," Coles said. "We don't know where it leads, but basic understanding is what comes from trying to understand nature at its most fundamental."

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## SUIT

FROM PAGE A1

officer for the El Paso County Sheriff's Department, and Rafael Morales Jr., a U.S. citizen, his uncle, Guadalupe Morales and brother, Jaime Morales Valencia.

Besides HSBC Holdings Inc., being listed as the defendant, other defendants include HSBC Bank U.S.A., N.A., HSBC Mexico S.A., Institucion de Banca Multiple, Grup Financiero HSBC and Grupo Financiero HSBC, S.A. de C.V.

The lawsuit alleges that leading up to the attacks on the agents and other victims of drug cartel violence, HSBC knowingly laundered money for the Mexican cartels who committed the attacks, including the Sinaloa, Juarez and Los Zetas cartels, knowing or "disregarding the fact that said funds would be used to support the Mexican cartels and their terrorist acts against Mexican and U.S. citizens."

The lawsuit states HSBC intentionally

implemented "criminally deficient anti-money laundering (AML) programs."

According to the lawsuit, employees at HSBC Mexican branches routinely accepted hundreds of thousands of dollar in deposits from people with no "identifiable source of income," the suit states. In addition, some employees refused to close accounts that had been connected to money laundering and allowed them to be open for years, though they had been ordered to stay closed, according to the lawsuit.

The lawsuit also states USBC Mexican branch employees were paid money to open the accounts.

"In multiple instances, employees accepted bribes payments from cartel money launderers to accept or process illicit proceeds and help orchestrate massive and sophisticated money laundering schemes for the cartels," the lawsuit alleges.

The lawsuit states HSBC admitted to anti-money laundering failures and accepted criminal liability for them and

admitted that as a result of those failures at least \$881 million of drug cartel proceeds were laundered through its banks.

Because HSBC allowed money laundering in its financial institution that was ultimately funding the works of the drug cartels, it is liable under the Anti-Terrorism Act for the injuries sustained by victims and their families, the lawsuit states.

In December 2012, HSBC Group entered into a Deferred Prosecution Agreement, or DPA, in which it admitted failure to properly maintain an effective Anti-Money Laundering Program. As part of its DPA, HSBC paid \$1.9 billion in forfeiture and fines.

The families are requesting the maximum judgment allowed including "reasonable costs" and attorney fees. The lawsuit against HSBC was filed earlier this week in a U.S. District Court in Brownsville.

Over the past several years, four people have pleaded guilty to charges concerning Zapata's murder and the attempted murder of Avila.

Julian Espinoza Zapata, 32, also known as El Piolin or "Tweety," Ruben Dario Venegas Rivera, 25, also

known as "Catracho;" and Jose Ismael Nava Villagran, 30, also known as "Cacho," pleaded guilty to one count each to federal charges concerning the murder and attempted murder of agents Zapata and Avila.

In addition, Francisco Carbajal Flores, 38, also known as "Dalmata," entered a guilty plea to a charge of "conspiracy to conduct the affairs of an enterprise through a pattern of racketeering activity and to being an accessory after the fact to the murder and attempted murder of the agents," according to federal documents.

Authorities said that as part of the guilty pleas Zapata Espinoza, Venegas Rivera and Nava Villagran admitted to being members of the Zetas hit squad and participating directly in the ambush on the agents. Carbajal Flores admitted to assisting Zeta members in the attack.

A fifth suspect, Jose Emanuel Garcia Sota, was extradited from Mexico last year. He is pending trial. The sentencing of Espinoza Zapata, Venegas Rivera, Nava Villagran and Carbajal Flores are pending.

## HALL

FROM PAGE A1

the 2017-2018 school year. The commission must submit its recommendations to Gov. Gregg Abbott by Sept. 1.

Cortez noted that the task of revamping the state's accountability system "is not something that can be accomplished in two hours," and he applauded "the willingness of the people in the Rio Grande Valley to have a voice" in the process. He promised to schedule other meetings like Thursday's

"to continue the dialogue."

During a break-out session that was part of Thursday's meeting, Michael Moreno, the principal of Victoria Heights Elementary School in Brownsville, said that having special education students take a modified version of the state's STAARS assessment test "makes it a very difficult task (for them) to meet the mark ... To expect that group of kids" to perform like the others "can really skew how you're doing," he said.

In the same breakout, Merrill Hammons, BISD administrator of Advanced Academic Services, said the state needs to devise a "fair and equitable" accountability system, a task

that he said would be "exceedingly difficult but not impossible."

Under House Bill 2804, districts and campuses will be assigned a rating of A, B, C, D or F in four domains: Student Achievement, Student Progress, Closing Performance Gaps and Post-Secondary Readiness. The first three domains account for 55 percent of the overall rating, while Post-Secondary Readiness accounts for 35 percent.

A fifth domain, Community and Student Engagement, accounts for the other 10 percent of the overall rating and is self-rated. It includes three indicators chosen by the district and three chosen by the campus.

Many at the meeting expressed support for what appears to be an effort to include participation in fine arts activities like band and choir, and University Interscholastic League activities like sports and extracurricular activities.

In a wrap-up session near the end of the meeting, Mary Tolman, BISD administrator of Special Programs, urged greater involvement by teachers in the assessment and accountability process, rather than just test scores. She urged a system that averages inputs by teachers, the school district and the state.

"To leave the teacher out of it is just wrong," she said.

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