

Bexar's D.C. delegation left weakened

Gonzales' exit could mean less presence on key committees

By Molly Smith
STAFF WRITER

One of Tony Gonzales' strategies for staving off the loss of the Army North and Army South command headquarters in San Antonio last year was to flatter President Donald Trump.

In June, the United States carried out a bombing raid on Iran that Trump called "a spectacular military success." He said it had obliterated the country's nuclear bomb-making capabilities, though a later U.S. assessment found that it hadn't.

The now-disgraced former Re-

publican congressman's plan was to create a military medal to honor the pilots and other personnel who participated in the attack — and get the fond attention of the commander in chief.

The decoration, Gonzales' thinking went, would also underscore how important San Antonio is to national defense. Everyone who enlists in the Air Force goes through basic training at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland on the city's Southwest Side.

"It's not just this operation, it's all these operations where we have this direct connection — we train the people," Gonzales said at

the time. "I don't think we do a good enough job of promoting how important San Antonio is to the overall DOD force."

His strategy was shaped by his 20-year Navy career, which included tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, and his insights into how the military works — as well as his familiarity with Trump.

The president endorsed Gonzales' reelection bid in a December post on Truth Social. "Tony knows the Wisdom and Courage that is required to Defend our Country, Support our Brave Military/Veterans, and Ensure
Gonzales continues on A7



San Antonio Express-News file photo

Former Rep. Tony Gonzales was tapped to the key Appropriations Committee partly because of his military expertise.

Spurs fans find better way to get absorbed in the game



Photos by Sam Owens/San Antonio Express-News

Team attendant Tyson Coleman wipes sweat from the floor during a Spurs game on April 10 at the Frost Bank Center.

When is wiping sweat, washing towels fun? When it's a labor of basketball love

By Liz Teitz
STAFF WRITER

Halfway through the first quarter of the Spurs' final game of the regular season, Stephon Castle makes a free throw, and the Frost Bank Center erupts with cheers.

After the Denver Nuggets inbound the ball and move down the court, everyone's attention shifts to the opposite hoop.

That's when Juan-Alberto Garcia springs into action.

As quickly as he can, Garcia pushes a mop around the paint, making sure the free-throw and lane lines are dry and free from sweat. NBA players perspire a lot during the game, and that perspiration ends up on the court during almost every play, especially when they line up for free throws, or fall and hit the ground. It has to constantly be cleaned to prevent players from slipping and falling.

After this particular cleanup mission, Garcia tucks the mop back into its place behind the basket, then returns to his own designated spot, a painted box on the baseline.

He'll have a chance to watch the game for a bit — until the next time someone takes a spill and hits the ground, when he'll be ready to wipe the court again.

Garcia, 27, is one of a dozen "team attendants" for the Spurs — the formal name for the job that includes mopping sweat off the court during



Tyson Coleman runs off the court after wiping the Frost Bank Center floor during a Spurs win over the Dallas Mavericks.

games, loading and unloading luggage, stocking locker rooms and doing endless loads of laundry, washing, drying and folding hundreds of towels every night.

It's a job that goes largely unseen unless something goes wrong — if someone slips on a wet spot on the court, or reaches for a towel that isn't there.

"If no one notices you, then

you're doing your job correctly," said Tyson Coleman, 24, who is in his second season as an attendant.

But for Coleman, Garcia and their coworkers, it's a job that lets them be a part of the team they grew up cheering for — and one they'll gladly do behind the scenes, late at night in quiet corners of the arena, on top of their full-time jobs, if it means they get to be part of the Spurs team.

The attendants arrive early before each home game — typically at least three hours before tip-off.

For most of them, that means coming straight from their regular full-time jobs. Garcia works at USAA, and Coleman is an elementary school physical education teacher in Gonzales. A few of their coworkers are still in high school, while the most senior attendant has been in the job for more than 25 years.

One of their first tasks — and one that will continue until their night ends eight or more hours later — is preparing hundreds of towels for the game, so any time a player needs one, a fresh towel is ready.

Tucked away in a corner of the Frost Bank Center behind the visiting team's weight room, the attendants man a large washer and dryer and fold bins full of towels to bring out to the court, and throughout the game, they'll run a steady stream of used ones
Spurs continues on A7

MANUEL P. BERRIOZÁBAL
1931-2026

Professor devoted to boosting Hispanic students

By Richard A. Marini
STAFF WRITER

In an oft-told story, Manuel P. Berriozábal was a professor in the early days of the University of Texas at San Antonio when he read a quote in a local magazine claiming that the city's Mexican American community "is not where engineers come from."

The comment galvanized his already firm commitment to uplift Hispanic youth and eventually led to the creation of the Prefreshman Engineering Program, a rigorous summer program that prepares middle and high school students for college-level engineering coursework.

Berriozábal died Wednesday from complications of Alzheimer's disease. He was 94.

Since the program's launch in 1979, more than 50,000 Texas students, many from Hispanic and low-income families, have taken PREP courses, and the concept was replicated by numerous colleges and universities in Texas and elsewhere. Berriozábal served as director of the local program through 2003, and in 2023, it was renamed the Dr. Manuel P. Berriozábal Prefreshman Engineering Program.

Former Mayor Henry Cisneros got a firsthand look at how seriously Berriozábal took the program when his daughter, Mercedes, was enrolled in it and ran into a conflict with her schedule as a member of her high school cheer squad.

"So Mercedes went to Dr. Berriozábal and asked for a week off to participate in a weeklong practice session," he recalled. "And he said, 'Absolutely not. You have to decide between mathematics and cheer, and I recommend you choose mathematics.'"

In addition to founding PREP, Berriozábal was professor emeritus of mathematics at UTSA, a charter member of the Texas Science Hall of Fame and, in 2001, recipient of the Yueh-Gin Gung and Dr. Charles Y. Hu Award for Distinguished Service to Mathematics, the most prestigious award for service offered by the Mathematical Association of America.

In a statement, Mayor Gina Ortiz Jones said, in part, "The legacy Dr. Berriozábal
Professor continues on A4

