

Spread of Spanish unwelcome by some

By William Branigin,
The Washington Post

ATLANTA — As the nation's Hispanic population expands dramatically, with Spanish permeating not only "gateway" cities like Miami and New York but major heartland capitals as well, legislators and civic leaders are confronting new questions about how, or whether, to regulate the emergence of Spanish as a lingua franca of American life.

The debate is moving beyond familiar controversies over bilingual education in states such as Florida and California, and is now washing into small towns and Southern cities where Americans until recently have had little direct involvement in arguments over whether the primacy of English matters and why. Most communities seem to be responding to the spread of Spanish with acceptance and accommodation, in part because businesses and politicians of all stripes increasingly recognize the enormous buying power and political clout of the nation's Hispanics. That purchasing power grew to an estimated \$348 billion nationwide in 1997, up 65

percent from 1990.

But there is also unease in many small towns and in some cities, where official English advocates are trying to rally resistance to the increase in Spanish use, especially in public life. At least 22 states now have laws declaring English the sole official language. Most such laws have been approved in the last decade and are largely symbolic. Of greater consequence for many Latinos and immigrants are local ordinances that penalize them for such linguistic "infringements" as posting commercial signs in foreign languages.

Consider Maria Cobarrubias, who has built her general store into a profitable fixture in the Atlanta suburb of Norcross by catering to a growing Hispanic community that is transforming many parts of the South. Cobarrubias was stunned to receive a visit recently from the local marshal, who fined her for having a sign with the store's name, Supermercado Jalisco, in Spanish. Supermercado is the Spanish word for supermarket, and Jalisco is the Mexican state where Cobarrubias was born. Cobarrubias, 37, said she has lived in Norcross for seven years but heard of the law for

the first time in November. She said she paid a \$115 fine but is thinking about fighting back in court.

Enforcement of the ordinance has outraged Mexican diplomats, and the American Civil Liberties Union said it may challenge the law as unconstitutional. "All our customers are Spanish-speaking," Cobarrubias said, worrying aloud that a sign with "supermarket" in English will attract fewer shoppers. In her own family, her two children speak English and Spanish fluently. Cobarrubias said. "We think both languages are very, very important," she said. "And if you have the opportunity of learning two languages as a child, that's a gift."

Not all of her American neighbors agree. An area long considered off the beaten path for immigrants, this part of Georgia began receiving thousands of refugees from Southeast Asia in the 1980s. Most gravitated toward Atlanta's northern suburbs. More recently, Mexicans and Central Americans have poured in, drawn by the city's booming economy. Today, an estimated 500,000 Hispanics live in Georgia, most of them around Atlanta. About three-quarters are Mexicans. Mirroring a national trend, they have overtaken blacks as the

largest minority in many Georgia communities.

In Norcross, a town of about 6,500 people north of Atlanta, the influx prompted the city council in 1995 to adopt an ordinance prohibiting signs that are less than 75 percent English, as determined by local authorities. Officially, the reason is to help police, fire and rescue personnel identify and locate businesses in emergencies. But to many Hispanics, the measure discriminates against their heritage, sending a message that they should conform to American culture.

Sgt. H. Smith, the Norcross marshal, said he has also issued citations to several Korean churches and an "Oriental beauty shop." Some Spanish words are "acceptable," he said, while others, such as "supermercado," must be changed.

"The 'super' is English. But I don't know what 'mercado' means," he said. "If an American was out there driving by, he wouldn't know what that was." "The general population needs to be able to read the signs," said Johnny Lawler, Norcross's community development director. But he insisted that the main reason for the law is to help police and firefighters. "We discriminate in

favor of English as far as public safety is concerned," he said.

To many Hispanics, the policy appears to hide more insidious motives. "This is really discrimination against new immigrants," complained Teodoro Maus, the Mexican consul general in Atlanta. "I don't see them applying this law to Italian or French restaurants." Neighboring Doraville, also home to large numbers of Hispanic and Asian immigrants, has an ordinance like the one in Norcross but has chosen not to enforce it.

"The attitudes have changed tremendously here in the last couple of years," said Ray Ortega, who owns a travel agency in Doraville. "Because the economic impact is becoming so strong, a lot of business people are looking to Hispanics in a more positive way."

Among those who have embraced the new reality is Dennis Mathews, 47, who has seen his supermarket business boom since he began trying to attract Hispanic customers. After struggling for several years, he and a partner restocked their store with Mexican foods, hired Spanish-speaking employees and put up signs in Spanish. Today, the "Valu Foods"

sign on the front shares billing with the name that Hispanics use for the store: "El Valu." About four years ago, he said, "we started to see the influence of Mexicans coming into our store, and we decided we should focus on them." The partners also put "Bienvenidos" (Welcome) in neon above the front door and aisle markers in Spanish throughout the store.

After making the switch, "we wouldn't hire anybody unless they were bilingual," Mathews said. But when such employees became harder to find a couple of years ago, "we decided we had to hire people who are pretty much Spanish-only." The store also now advertises only on Spanish-language radio and TV stations.

"As the Mexicans become a larger part of our population, those people who don't try to accommodate them are going to be hurt," Mathews said. "I get lots of calls (for advice) from independent retailers in small towns in North and South Carolina, places where you'd never expect to have pockets of Mexicans," he said. "Even towns of 4,000 people are starting to see the influence."

Kenya stops extradition of embassy bombing suspect to U.S.

By Ann M. Simmons,
Los Angeles Times

NAIROBI, Kenya — After claims that the suspect had been tortured and unlawfully detained, a Kenyan high court has stopped the FBI from extraditing a Kenyan mechanic to United States for further questioning about last year's bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi.

The court, in the coastal city of Mombasa, Friday ordered that Ali Mohfoudh Salim either be released or be brought before a Kenyan court as soon as possible. It also ordered the immigration department to prevent security agents from taking

Salim out of the country.

Salim was arrested last Thursday by FBI agents who, the court was told, suspected that the mechanic's garage might have been used to build the vehicle that transported the bomb to Nairobi.

The action to prevent Salim's extradition marks the first time the FBI has faced a legal obstacle in its quest to arrest suspects in the Aug. 7 blast, which killed 213 people and left more than 5,000 injured. A simultaneous explosion at the U.S. Embassy in Tanzania killed 11. Two suspects have been extradited to the United States in connection with the Nairobi bombing.

Kenya's attorney general and police commissioner are under court orders to make sure that the FBI produces Salim in court Tuesday. Lawyer Taib Ali Taib, who applied for a habeas corpus on behalf of Salim's family, said U.S. agents had refused to be served with the court summons. He accused the FBI of violating his client's fundamental constitutional and human rights.

Taib said Salim had been held incommunicado for three days. He was barred from speaking to his family and denied access to legal representation, Taib said. "We don't mind our client being charged. Whoever committed this heinous (bombing) should face the law," Taib

said Saturday in a phone conversation from Mombasa, adding that Salim's family was confident of his innocence. "But we insist the process of investigations, must adhere to the law. If we break the law to find these people, we are no better than them. I didn't expect this from the FBI."

Taib said he was unaware of Salim's whereabouts and had not had the opportunity to speak to his client since his arrest. Police have refused to disclose to Salim's next-of-kin why and where he was being held. Taib said.

A six-page affidavit filed by Salim's brother, Faiz Mohfoudh Salim, claimed that the U.S. agents

seized the suspect's passport and harassed and intimidated him during several visits to the mechanic's workshop, beginning Feb. 2. The U.S. agents were accompanied by Kenyan police.

According to the affidavit, U.S. agents interrogated Salim for 12 hours, conducted tests and took photographs at his garage, and questioned him about the body of a vehicle he had built. Salim was then reportedly arrested and detained initially at a local police station, according to his brother.

Taib said Faiz Mohfoudh Salim suspected that his brother had been tortured. In the United States, the FBI had no comment. Kenya gave the

bureau permission to operate in the country shortly after the bombing. "Torture doesn't have to be a beating," Taib said. "The fact that someone has been held without access to a phone call, family, or a lawyer, is torture itself."

The FBI's hunt for suspects connected with the Nairobi bombing has caused public outcry among members of Kenya's Islamic community, who believe that Muslims are being unfairly targeted. Other Kenyan's have complained about U.S. agents operating with impunity, without regard for local legal procedures and a lack of respect for their Kenyan police counterparts.

Trial starting for bounty hunter who claimed to be FBI

By Brooke A. Masters,
The Washington Post

The first sign of trouble came when Elizabeth Ann Behrmann saw armed men in "SWAT type" uniforms running across her Reston, Va., back yard. Then came the knock at the door: "FBI. Open up."

On the doorstep stood a man in an FBI baseball hat, 6-foot-7, nearly 300 pounds, wearing a badge around his neck and holding a drawn handgun along his right thigh. He told her he wanted to search her home for a fugitive named "Freeman," according to federal court documents. Behrmann asked if he had a warrant, but she told authorities, the man replied: "I'm with the FBI. I don't need a warrant. I can search your house without your permission." So she let him in.

In truth, Buddy Lee Spenser, 42, isn't an FBI agent at all. The Haymarket, Va., resident is a bounty hunter, and he goes on trial this week in federal court on charges of illegally posing as a federal agent as he tracked bail jumpers. Spenser's attorney, William M. Stanley, said his client denies the allegations. "Buddy Spenser is absolutely innocent," Stanley said. "He is in an awful situation not of his own making."

Bounty hunters, who trace their origins to the Wild West, generally make their living locating suspects who disappear after arranging for bail bondsmen to get them out of jail. The bondsmen usually pay the bounty hunter a portion of the bond that would have been lost if the suspect never returned. The system brings back an estimated 87 percent of bail jumpers, said Mel Barth, executive director of the National Association of Bail Enforcement Agents.

But the profession is barely regulated, and many bounty hunters have been criticized for busting down doors, lying to and frightening citizens and sometimes causing international incidents when they cross borders to catch people who have failed to show up for court. In November, an Arizona jury convicted a self-proclaimed bounty hunter of murder for storming into a home and shooting an innocent

young couple.

Barth says his group discourages its 2,500 members from posing as law enforcement officers, lawyers and journalists and from forcing their way into homes. But some trackers believe deception is essential, and they regularly pose as package deliverymen or salesmen to get information or get through a door peacefully. Others carry official-looking badges and identity cards.

In the Reston case, Spenser was after a man charged with check fraud, but he had the wrong address. The bounty hunter's actions crossed the line into illegal behavior, according to FBI supervisory special agent J. Andrew McColl, whose squad investigated the case after Behrmann and her neighbor complained to police. "You get some people every now and then that say they're working for the FBI but not really acting on it ... but this guy went and searched a house, which we couldn't do," McColl said.

Spenser is relatively new to bounty hunting, Stanley said. He took it up last year after owning a limousine company and doing security for visiting celebrities, the lawyer said.

Last spring, while chasing fugitives and showing "wanted" posters, Spenser claimed on at least four occasions to be working for the FBI, according to prosecution documents filed in U.S. District Court. He passed out business cards saying he was a "special agent" with the "United States Fugitive Recovery Task Force." Last summer, he allegedly posed as a deputy U.S. marshal to get reduced rates at two motels while joining the search for abortion clinic bombing suspect Eric Robert Rudolph in North Carolina and western Virginia, according to a motion filed by Assistant U.S. Attorney David Hackney.

Stanley points out his client worked as a paid, confidential FBI informant from 1987 to 1998, according to court documents filed by the prosecution. He provided information on drug deals and served as a go-between in a bribery sting, according to court documents. Spenser told investigators his FBI cap was given to him by contacts at the bureau.

Few regulations restrict bounty hunters

By Brooke A. Masters,
The Washington Post

In some ways, the nation's estimated 2,500 to 5,000 "bail recovery agents" have more leeway than do the police. An 1873 Supreme Court decision, Taylor vs. Taintor, ruled that they can enter homes and grab bail jumpers without a warrant because the fugitive, in accepting a bond, has agreed to allow the bondsman to come after him.

Only a few states regulate bounty hunters; Florida, for example, has an outright ban on out-of-state bounty hunters. "It is a mounting national problem ... (and) a very dangerous situation," said Sen. Robert G. Torricelli, D-N.J., who became interested in the issue after bounty hunters grabbed an innocent woman in New York and took her to Alabama. When they realized they had the wrong person, they gave her \$24 for bus fare home.

Last year, Torricelli introduced a bill calling on the Justice Department to issue guidelines for state licensing of bounty hunters. It passed the Senate but not the House, so he plans to try again this session. "They should be insured and investigated. These aren't people we want working as an arm of law enforcement. Some are former criminals themselves," he said. "This idea of people entering without warrants must come to an end."

"There's a whole lot of police wannabes and Rambo wannabes," said Stephen Kreimer, executive director of the Professional Bail Agents of the United States. "Other than the person's integrity, there's nothing to stop them from doing what they want."

Mel Barth, executive director of the National Association of Bail Enforcement Agents, said his group recognizes the current system can cause problems, although he argues that states that go too far with regulation could become havens for criminal fugitives. "We're trying to build a certain amount of professionalism," said Barth, whose association offers three-day training sessions for members.

World watches as King Abdullah takes over father's reign

By Matthew McAllester, Newsday

In May, 1953, three days after he took the reins of power, the idealistic teen-age, British-educated King Hussein introduced a startling new policy of freedom of speech and freedom of the press. The results were disastrous. The young King's enemies used their new liberty to try to bring down the monarchy. Hussein felt compelled to quash his own democratic impulses by introducing an authoritarian government on the first anniversary of his coronation.

It was not a good start. And he was to make other mistakes. But Hussein evolved into an agile politician, keeping one eye on his enemies at all times. Nearly 46 years later, he died one of the most respected rulers in the world, a symbol of stability and wisdom.

Now, as his son, King Abdullah, takes over the running of the country, anxious governments in Israel, the United States and around the Arab world are waiting to see if the young king can maintain the stability of his nation without making the traumatic early mistakes his father made on the throne. Although Jordan is an economically and militarily weak country, its condition could affect the fragile balance of the whole region. If Abdullah fails to maintain the equilibrium his father created, the region could descend into warfare. If he succeeds as ruler of Jordan, he could be the founding member of a

new club of young, western-educated leaders taking over from their aged and ailing fathers around the Arab world.

Abdullah has many things going for him that his father didn't. When Hussein ascended to the throne, the country created only about 30 years earlier had recently taken a beating by Israel in the 1948 war of independence and was surrounded by ambitious Arab states.

Today, Jordan is at peace with Israel, has strong ties to the United States and has long since calmed the internal battles between the country's majority Palestinians and ruling ethnic Jordanians. But it remains a vulnerable player in the endless game of positioning for influence that is played by its neighbors such as Syria, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq. Situated between four of those countries, it has a strategic importance that far outweighs its muscle.

Few analysts or diplomats think it likely that any of its neighbors would try to take advantage of Abdullah's inexperience by invading the country. "It's more likely to be meddling rather than overt action," said Shibley Telhami, a professor of political science and expert on Arab-Israeli relations at the University of Maryland.

"Relations with Jordan are not simple," acknowledged Badi Khattab, deputy chief of mission at the Syrian Embassy in Washington. "But we have absolutely nothing to do with

their internal affairs. That's up to them." "Nevertheless, in the unlikely event of Iraq, for example, pushing into Jordanian territory, Israel would be likely to rush to Jordan's aid. That could lead to a larger regional conflagration. We would not allow Israel to do this," said Ahmed Maher el Sayed, the Egyptian ambassador to the United States.

More likely, the challenge to Abdullah would come from within Jordan and even within the Hashemite royal family, analysts say. Although recently considered rival candidates for the crown, Abdullah's brothers Ali and Hamzah are loyal and loving to their oldest brother, say friends of Abdullah, experts and diplomats.

"Hassan is the only threat," Telhami said, referring to Abdullah's uncle, who was crown prince for 34 years until Hussein changed his mind a few weeks ago and appointed Abdullah in his place. "But Abdullah has military support and some experience in foreign policy. He certainly hasn't been groomed to be king, but I don't think structurally that's a problem because Hassan doesn't have the support of the military and he's not popular."

In an interview that was reported in the New York Times on Saturday, Abdullah said he wanted his uncle to continue working closely with him but admitted there had been tensions between them.

Delta to offer discount web airfare

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — First came the stick and now the carrot. Just days after abandoning its effort to collect \$2 for every round-trip flight that wasn't booked on its Web site, Delta Air Lines Inc. was back at it again, this time offering "Weekly Web Fares" for anyone making their reservations on the company's Internet site.

Starting this Wednesday and every Wednesday thereafter, Delta said it will offer "deeply discounted" fares the following weekend to a variety of U.S. destinations if people

purchase the tickets on the Delta Web site. Passengers using the Web fares would be able to depart each Saturday and return the following Monday or Tuesday.

Customers buying tickets on the Web site will be issued electronic tickets, further reducing the airline's costs. By convincing customers to purchase tickets through the Internet, the airline potentially saves millions of dollars in travel agent commissions and transaction charges on the computer reservations systems. Electronic tickets add to the potential savings.

Less than 2 percent of Delta

passengers now make their reservations through the Internet. And like a sugar salesman handing out free candy on the corner, Delta is giving frequent-flier bonuses for anyone using the Web site and electronic tickets: 500 bonus miles for using the Web site and another 500 miles for the e-ticket. Several other airlines, including American Airlines Inc., have similar programs.