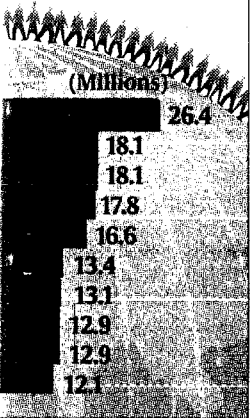


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By Bob Laird, USA TODAY

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SYDNEY, Australia — In mid-1998, Michael Bennett wasn't anybody's idea of a role model. He was a convicted felon serving out seven years in an Illinois state prison for armed robbery.

Today, the soft-spoken 29-year-old, who learned to box in prison, is pounding his heart out for Olympic gold as co-captain of the U.S. boxing team.

"I don't think we could have a finer representative of USA Boxing," says Paul Montville, the organization's executive director. "Michael's work ethic is incredible. He has an amazing amount of self-

to watch
Determined Chicago fighter made 'crazy' mistake 9 years ago, served time in prison, now goes for gold as team captain

team, calls the unmapable 6-6, 201-pound heavyweight "the most level-headed guy on the team."

That's not a description that many, including Bennett, would have used in 1991 when the then-college freshman took a fateful decision to join a friend in robbing a toy store at gunpoint.

"I knew it was crazy," says Bennett, a Chicago native with no prior arrests or criminal record. He was right. That rash act brought him an armed robbery conviction and a 15-year prison sentence, later re-

See COVER STORY next page ▶

towns and spun the job over to... killed a total of 157 people.

The FAA appointed an engineering review board to study the rudder, but officials from the agency and Boeing initially supported a series of minor changes. However, the engineering group's findings, which echoed the NTSB's, built momentum for a redesign.

Modern large commercial jets have three hydraulic devices that move the rudder so that if one device fails, it can be overpowered by the other two. In the 737, which was designed in the 1960s, engineers attempted to achieve the same effect with two hydraulic devices. Investigators have identified several scenarios that can cause it to fail.

Boeing intends to add a third hydraulic device to the tail of the more than 3,000 jets, which have one of the best overall safety records. An estimate of the costs of altering the rudders was not available, but Boeing is expected to pay for the new equipment.

DOE to reveal list of private nuclear work sites

Processed weapons material in '40s, '50s

By Peter Eisler
 USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — The Department of Energy, reversing decades of government secrecy, will release the names of hundreds of private companies that processed radioactive and toxic material for the U.S. nuclear weapons program in the 1940s and '50s.

A public database is being developed amid demands from Capitol Hill for a full accounting of the work done by commer-

cial facilities that had classified contracts or sub-contracts with the weapons program. USA TODAY detailed many of the contracting operations last week in a three-day series examining their often severe health and environmental consequences.

DOE officials expect to put out an initial list next week of all private and government-owned facilities ever involved in nuclear weapons production, though information on the scope and dates of work at each site probably won't be added for a few weeks. Though the federal plants and labs that did weapons work have long been known, the government

has never identified more than a few dozen commercial properties where contractors processed weapons material.

"We are reconstructing the history of these (private) sites," says Energy Secretary Bill Richardson. "In the near future, we expect to have a more thorough, comprehensive list and a plan for addressing health and environmental concerns."

USA TODAY found that roughly 300 private companies were hired secretly in the 1940s and '50s to do nuclear weapons work, handling thousands of tons of uranium, thorium, polonium, beryllium and other radioactive and toxic sub-

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stances. The newspaper's investigation named 150 of the contracting sites and revealed that workers at many of them were exposed to extreme levels of radiation and chemical hazards, usually without their knowledge. The series also showed that many of the facilities pumped large volumes of hazardous waste into sur-

rounding communities unaware of the weapons work being done by local businesses.

A growing number of lawmakers have since called on DOE to release information on the contracting operations, most of which concluded in the '50s as the government got its own weapons-making facilities built to take over the work.

"Investigations regarding past operations and practices at these facilities would help determine the level of contamination of the site and human exposure," Rep. Nick Lampson, D-Texas, wrote in a letter pressing DOE to release information on the "forgotten sites."

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