

THIEF'S ODD COURSE

Dive boat stolen from harbor runs aground near Vandenberg



A Vandenberg security officer reports to the site where a stolen dive boat ran aground south of the base on Wednesday. As the *Conception* left the Santa Barbara Harbor earlier, it struck three other boats, partially sinking the *Slick Chick*, at right.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF U.S. AIR FORCE

Security scours scene for culprit, who left pile of wet clothing, footprints on shoreline

By **NORA K. WALLACE**
and **MORGAN GREEN**
NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITERS

A thief made off with one of Santa Barbara's most popular dive boats early Wednesday morning, crashing into and partially sinking a fishing boat during an erratic exit from the harbor before the vessel ran aground in an area dubbed the "Graveyard of the Pacific."

The steel-hulled, 75-foot-long *Conception*, owned by Truth Aquatics and

usually docked at Sea Landing in the Santa Barbara Harbor, was found Wednesday morning beached about a mile south of the Vandenberg Air Force Base's lighthouse at Point Arguello, said Capt. Todd Fleming, a base spokesman. The area is known for its treacherous waters and history of shipwrecks.

Because Vandenberg is a top-secret military installation, security forces scoured the scene for the intruders. No

Please see **THEFT** on **A14**