

FREE

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Santa Monica Daily Press

Picked fresh daily. 100% organic news.

It's not all fun and games on outdoor mall

Hacky sack could be banned from the Promenade

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

Some business owners say a friendly outdoor sport is the root of many evils on the Third Street Promenade.

So they have suggested that the city ban "hacky sack," a popular game played with a round bean bag, from the outdoor mall.

As part of its on-going efforts to address public safety issues on the Promenade, a small committee of Bayside District Corporation board members is looking at ways the city, police department and maintenance workers can address many business owners' worries.

One of their concerns is that people kicking around hacky sacks are causing a public nuisance. Sometimes, the hacky sack hits pedestrians strolling by. Occasionally, it thumps against storefront windows, business owners say.

Business owners claim the group's play deters residents and shoppers from sitting on benches in the center court — which is in the middle of the Promenade, directly across from the food court.

"What we're doing is looking at more ways to open up the space to the public," said Kathleen Rawson, Bayside's executive director. "If people are playing hacky sack there, you probably would feel less inclined to walk through the center court."

The committee also is considering removing the benches in the center court and erecting a tent where various city restaurants could set up food stands.

At a meeting last week, the committee played a video tape to City Attorney Marsha Moutrie, Police Chief James T. Butts, Jr. and Mayor Pro Tem Kevin McKeown that showed a group of youths in the center court of the Promenade kicking around a hacky sack.

The group had left their backpacks strewn about the ground, along with other larger bags and belongings, officials said.

Moutrie told the business owners that constitutionally, the city cannot pass

See HACKY SACK, page 3



Andrew H. Fixmer/Daily Press
A group of youths play hacky sack in center court on the Third Street Promenade Tuesday. Some want the sport banned because of public safety issues.

Police investigating local armed robberies

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

Local police are looking for a man that may be linked to two armed robberies in the past four days.

A black man, between the ages of 18-22, 5' 10", and 170 pounds with black hair styled in corn rows, has been described as a possible suspect in armed robberies at Ladd's Liquor Store on 10th Street and Broadway, and at The Slice on Ninth Street and Wilshire Boulevard.

At about 8:15 p.m. on Monday, two black males went into Ladd's Liquor, held the owner at gunpoint and demanded money from the cash register. They took \$200 and fled east on Broadway before ducking into a nearby alley. A third suspect was waiting in a vehicle, described as a dark-colored early 1990s Nissan.

On Saturday at about 8:32 p.m., two men came into The Slice, looked at the pizza shop's menu before holding the store's owner, Matt Aminoff, at gunpoint. They made off with an unknown amount of cash and fled east on Wilshire, before ducking into an alley.

"Detectives are looking at these two incidents to determine if the suspects are the same," said Santa Monica Police Lt. Frank Fabrega. "We are looking at the possibility."

Aminoff said armed robberies seem to be on the rise in Santa Monica. He has taken measures to prevent such a disturbing experience from happening again.

"We have implemented new policies in here and strategies on how to avoid this in the future," he said. "It's a community problem and I'm not sure the people in Santa Monica know this is going on. This happens much more often than people think — whether that's a business owner or the man on the street."

"The police are doing a great job to enforce the laws and capture these people," Aminoff said. "They were here almost immediately and they really have done everything to find these people."

Police in surrounding cities have been alerted to the suspects' descriptions, Fabrega said.

Anyone with information about either incident should call SMPD's robbery/homicide division at (310) 458-8451.

Oil companies guilty of polluting groundwater

Ruling makes SM's legal case against Shell Oil, Arco stronger

By staff and wire reports

SAN FRANCISCO — The same oil companies accused of polluting Santa Monica's drinking water were found guilty of dumping toxins into Lake Tahoe, a jury ruled Monday.

A San Francisco jury has found three oil companies responsible for polluting Lake Tahoe groundwater with the gasoline additive MTBE. It also found that two of them were aware of the chemical's dangers but withheld that information.

Shell Oil, Lyondell Chemical Co., which was formerly Arco, and Tosco Corp., were found responsible for pollu-

tion. The San Francisco Superior Court jury found Monday that MTBE is a defective product and that Shell and Lyondell withheld information about the chemical.

Two years ago Santa Monica sued 18 refiners, manufacturers and suppliers of MTBE and MTBE-laden gasoline for allowing the chemical to leak into its ground water. Two of the oil companies are Shell Oil Co. and Arco.

The city will seek damages, though the cost of cleaning up the ground water has been estimated to cost more than \$200 million.

The pollution closed seven of Santa Monica's 11 wells, forcing the city to import about 80 percent of the 12 million gallons of water it uses a day from outside sources. Until the ground water is cleaned up, the oil companies are paying

See MTBE, page 3

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Santa Monica's Daily Calendar



GET OUT!

Puppetolio! hosted by Santa Monica Puppet & Magic Center will be held today at 1:00 p.m. Shows are always followed by a demonstration, Q & A, and a tour of the Puppet Museum and workshop. The program is for all ages, 3 and up. All seats: \$6.50. The Center is located at 1255 2nd Street in Santa Monica, adjacent to the Third Street Promenade. Reservations/Information: (310) 656-0483 or www.puppetmagic.com.

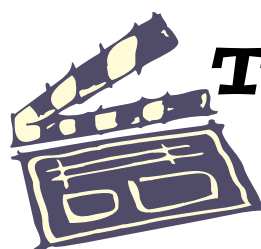
Shiatsu Massage School of California is hosting Kung Fu classes for advanced students from 4:15 to 5:15 every Wednesday. Suggested donation per class is \$4.00. Free class for first-time visitors. Instructed by: Master Luu Truong. 2309 Main St., (310) 396-4877.

Lamaze Childbirth - Lamaze natural childbirth classes will be offered at Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center on Wednesdays, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Classroom B at the medical center, 1250 16th St. in Santa Monica. \$135 Call (310) 319-4947 for reservations.

Want to be on the A-List?
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ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★★ Could there be such a thing as revealing too much? You need to think twice about revealing too many plans. Someone could hop on your great ideas. Return calls, but leave the socializing for later. OK? Tonight: Chat the night away.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★ You know what you want. Ask questions and seek out others. If you're questioning the end results of a particular situation, check in with someone in charge. Though you might be surprised by another's reactions, you discover that he or she is right-on. Tonight: Pay bills.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★★ Your instincts guide you well, especially concerning a money matter. You might not be as secure as you would like, but by asking the appropriate questions, you will gain professionally and emotionally. Be direct in your dealings with a friend. Tonight: Ask for what you want.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★ Let others act on their wishes. Allow co-workers to take the lead. Though you want to get the credit, you might do better by completing a key task. Someone demonstrates his or her caring. Respond with your normally effusive style. Tonight: Get a head start on tomorrow.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★★ Meetings prove to be instrumental, both emotionally and financially. Not everyone responds as you would like, but leave the door open for someone to change his or her mind gracefully. Make needed inquiries. Seek out experts. Trust your sixth sense. Tonight: Where your friends are.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★ Others look to you for answers. Use your innate sense of responsibility to create more of what you might like. Your sense of humor comes out with a friend you feel very comfortable with. Don't hesitate to state what you want. Tonight: Burn the midnight oil.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★★ Think in terms of gaining a new perspective rather than lecturing on what you already know. Others might be intimidating on some level. Sign up for that course. There is no such thing as knowing too much. A boss appreciates your financial insight. Tonight: Curl up with a good book.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★★ Another has a lot of feedback for you. Let go of defensiveness and listen. Remember to include this person in your thinking process; after all, it all began with him or her. Your imagination could take you to the next level. Recognize your limits, within reason. Tonight: Let another know just how much you appreciate him or her.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★★ You'll be much happier if you let others seek you out. Because you're generally the energizing force, others don't have to take the initiative as much as you would like, be it professionally or personally. Let someone come to you. Tonight: Go along with a pal's ideas.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★ You might be more enthusiastic about work if you live your life a little more. Many surround you who would like to be part of your social life. Do yourself a favor — let go of the work ethic and live your life to its fullest. Tonight: Splurge on yourself.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★★ What another suggests could be far more delightful than you realize. Don't get stuck in the rebellious mode so often associated with your sign. Go along with the program. You accomplish a lot professionally as a result. Tonight: Play away.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★★ You will like what comes up for you right now. Your imagination feeds into a conversation. To many, an idea could sound silly, but to you, it stimulates many other ideas. Don't slow down on a project involving real estate or your home. Tonight: Get sleep while you can.



QUOTE of the DAY

**“It takes about 10 years to
get used to how old you are.”**
— Unknown

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LOCAL



Public safety is a concern on the Promenade mall

HACKY SACK, from page 1

laws prohibiting specific groups from gathering.

However, a law could be passed banning all ball play on the Promenade. Already roller-skating, roller-blading, skateboarding and bicycle riding are prohibited.

"The only thing I saw was that they were playing a game," said Moutrie, "though it appears it's not dangerous, it could be problematic when the Promenade is crowded."

Mayor Mike Feinstein and McKeown understand the safety concerns, but they don't support an ordinance banning the game.

"I appreciate the concerns that people have about unsocial and potentially intimidating behavior by small minorities of people on the Promenade," Feinstein said. "I don't, however, feel that banning hacky sack, a non-violent playful activity, is the appropriate way to address people's concerns."

Feinstein said people playing hacky sack on the Promenade need to be considerate. However, he described people who play hacky sack as "mellow." He added that the game is about sharing the ball and keeping the group together instead of beating an opponent.

"It's not my primary sport," he said, "but I've been known to kick around the sack."

Yesterday afternoon a group of six young men took turns with the hacky sack, passing the small ball to each other only by using their feet or other body parts.

Sometimes the ball was kicked beyond the center court, and one member of the group would run through a small crowd of pedestrians to chase it down.

Only once did the ball come close to hitting somebody, and there was a conscience effort to keep the ball in the center court.

"I've never heard anybody complain, and I've never seen a pedestrian get hit," said "Dave," a hacky sack player who wouldn't give his last name. "This little bean bag is harmless, even little kids do this."

A few employees of businesses said the sport is not the real issue.

"The hacky sack has never bothered me," said Marie Scott, manager of Art

One. "It's the aggressive panhandling and all the screaming of profanities at each other that gets to me."

One employee said what some business owners see as bad characteristics of the Promenade may actually be drawing people to the street.

"It's all part of the Santa Monica culture. People come here to see everything from the homeless to people playing hacky sack."

— DAISY CHEN
Hype store employee

"It's all part of the Santa Monica culture," said Daisy Chen, a Hype store employee. "People come here to see everything from the homeless to people playing hacky sack."

Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce President Ann Greenspun, who also is a public safety committee member, said the group isn't trying to crack down on hacky sack specifically, but rather behavioral issues that may discourage people from shopping on the Promenade.

"There seem to be so many efforts to protect the rights of kids on the Promenade, but there doesn't seem to be the same level for business owners, who give back to the community," she said. "Overall, (the committee) is trying to address issues of behavior or crime because we want to make people believe this is a safe place to come, and that perception is very important."

The committee will meet Thursday to discuss its safety recommendations, including hacky sack. Those recommendations will then go before the full Bayside board for a vote.

If the full board approves the committee's recommendations they would be passed on to the city council, which is the only body that can prohibit activities on the Promenade — or anywhere else in the city.

A prehistoric check-up



Andrew H. Fixmer/Daily Press

Dameon Lester, an employee of an arts conservation company hired by the city, gives the Third Street Promenade dinosaurs a cleaning on Tuesday.

Local water wells forced closed because of MTBE

MTBE, from page 1

\$3.5 million a year to import drinking water to the city.

Damages in the Lake Tahoe case will be assessed in a separate phase of the trial.

The South Tahoe Public Utility District sued the oil companies in 1998 after MTBE pollution forced it to close a third of its drinking water wells.

Water district lawyers used papers during the trial that they said showed the companies knew that MTBE could move

far and quickly through water and that it could be tasted and smelled at very low concentrations.

MTBE has been used as an oxygenate in gasoline to help certain regions reach clean air standards.

The south Tahoe area has shallow wells, many in the vicinity of gas station storage tanks, and quickly moving groundwater near the surface that contributed to the chemical reaching drinking water wells.

The cost to remove MTBE from the water supply is around \$45 million.



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OPINION

Editorial

City-Bubba Gump Shrimp deal smells fishy

Good or bad, Santa Monica has just moved one step closer to being a chain town.

In a town where its politicians claim to work diligently to keep its local flavor alive, it missed the boat when it allowed the Pier Restoration Corporation to sign on Bubba Gump Shrimp — a corporate chain restaurant.

It's not Disney. But it is Paramount. The city sold out to the highest bidder, a conglomerate that's willing to pay extraordinary costs to be here. But in the process, the city left one of Santa Monica's few longtime businesses hanging out to dry.

While we agree that the Santa Monica Pier needs a major shot in the arm to attract tourism, the PRC was shortsighted in thinking Bubba Gump will become the success story they hope it will be.

The city, which owns the pier, has a right as a landlord to get the best tenant at the best price, but at what cost? A 50-year-old business that has been integral to the development of the pier deserved a better shot at being that success story.

It often appears that the city says one thing but does another. The evidence lies in the PRC's own guidelines which stipulate that it favors locally owned, family businesses. But in the same breath, it ousted one of the oldest businesses in town.

It's hypocrisy in the clearest sense. Citizens are not ignorant to these inconsistencies in the city's policies and are growing tired of the lip service paid to them by public officials.

Naia Sheffield, who took over her family's business at the Boathouse, didn't deserve to be dismissed so rapidly when she proposed a new business plan that would have substantially changed the outdated restaurant.

If the PRC really wanted to keep the pier alive with local character and

charm, its members would have worked with Sheffield in coming up with a plan that worked.

In a country shaken by a recession and tragedy last year, you would think the city would make it a mission to help its businesses survive.

We realize it isn't Sheffield's God-given right to run a business at the pier, but it is the city's responsibility to help local businesses survive when it can. City officials took on that role when they said keeping Santa Monica vibrant with local businesses was a priority for them.

And while the quality of the Boathouse's food, clientele and its ambiance is debatable, it's all relative. Some PRC members felt Bubba Gump's menu offerings surpassed what Sheffield had in mind.

Are these people appointed to public positions to be food critics? What, they don't like the bisque?

It's widely known that the composition of the PRC board was made up largely of people who have been serving since the 1980s. It wasn't until after the Bubba Gump decision that were they replaced. Whether or not those new members would have helped keep the Boathouse afloat, we believe that at least the selection process would have been more on the level.

If we had visionaries at the helm last summer, perhaps there would have been a philosophical discussion about whether Santa Monica should be a chain town. In a sense, it already is and we have to accept it.

But we don't have to accept our politicians talking out of both sides of their mouths.

We deserve better and so did the Boathouse.

(Editorials by the Daily Press are based on the opinions of its editorial board, comprised of the publisher and the president.)

LETTERS

A sad ending

Editor:

My heart goes out to Boathouse owner Naia Sheffield. It's sad the city of Santa Monica is losing another longtime family owned business. I would like to thank Ms. Sheffield and the Boathouse for donating food for many of our coalition for a Santa Monica Disabilities Commission public meetings.

The Boathouse also hosted many special benefit and commemorative events at their familiar Santa Monica Pier location.

It is truly sad their doors are now being forced closed.

Jerry Rubin
 Santa Monica

Opinions expressed are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect those of the Santa Monica Daily Press staff. Guest editorials from residents are encouraged, as are letters to the editor. Letters will be published on a space-available basis. It is our intention to publish all letters we receive, except those that are libelous or are unsigned.

LOCAL □ STATE



CrimeWatch

Man caught red handed making threat

■ A man threatening to blow up the Santa Monica police station was caught red handed and arrested by police last month.

At 8:35 a.m. on March 18, 9-1-1 operators received a call from a man threatening to blow up the Santa Monica Police station. The call was traced and officers raced to a pay phone on the 2600 block of Main Street where they found John Marshal Treseder still speaking to the 9-1-1 operator.

Treseder was arrested and taken to Santa Monica Jail. He was booked for reporting a false bomb threat. His bail was set at \$50,000.

■ At about 9:15 p.m. Sunday, April 7, a man entered a business on the 2300 block of Ocean Park Boulevard, brandished a handgun and demanded money from an employee. The employee complied, and the suspect ran off with \$200 in cash.

The suspect is described as a black male in his 30s, 5' 8", 160 lbs., and was wearing a gray hooded sweatshirt, baggy black pants and had a thin goat-tee.

■ At 2 a.m. on Sunday, April 7, a woman walking outside her apartment on Sea View was knocked to the ground by an attacker. The man tried to unbutton her pants, but the victim was able to fight him off. The man fled on foot.

The suspect is a white male 5' 8", 175 lbs. and was wearing green army pants.

■ At 11 p.m. on Thursday, April 4, a woman was getting out of her car in an underground parking garage on the 900

block of Third Street when a man knocked her on the head with an object and demanded her money. He grabbed her bag and fled on foot.

The woman's injuries were minor. The suspect made off with \$8 in cash, the woman's identification and personal items.

The suspect is a black male, 23-26 years old, 5' 10", 185 lbs. and was wearing a blue tank top shirt, shorts, a jacket, and a black rag on his head.

■ At 11:30 p.m. on April 2, a man walking in the 2500 block of Sixth Street was approached by a man carrying what looked like a handgun wrapped in cloth. The suspect demanded money and reached into the victim's pocket. Finding no money, the robber demanded the victim's wallet. The victim opened his wallet, which also contained no cash. The suspect walked away.

The suspect is a black male, 18-25, 5' 10" and was wearing a dark jacket and dark pants.

■ On March 18, a man was attacked while walking down a city street at about 11:10 p.m. He was walking in the 1800 block of Colorado when a man approached him and asked for a cigarette. The victim told him he didn't have one and kept walking. Seconds later, he was jumped from behind and tackled to the ground. The victim stood up and the suspect ran east on Colorado Avenue.

The suspect is described as a white male, 30s, 6', 180 lbs., and wearing a white coat, dark pants and a thin mustache.

Hit by rat scandal, coroner sets limit for body disposal

BY ROBERT JABLON
Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — The county coroner will begin cremating decomposing bodies from a storage facility where rats chewed on a dozen corpses, officials said Tuesday.

Stung by the scandal, the agency is setting a six-month time limit for holding onto bodies rather than allowing them to literally stack up indefinitely.

After six months, the bodies will be cremated and the ashes stored for three years at the Los Angeles County mortuary before being interred in a common grave, said Craig R. Harvey, chief coroner investigator and chief of operations.

The oldest bodies — including one dating to 1996 — could be disposed of within two weeks, he said.

A 1995 body is a skeleton that is destined for use as a teaching tool for forensic anthropology students at California State University, Fullerton.

In addition, in an effort to slow decomposition, the coroner's office is studying whether it should hire a private contractor to begin embalming bodies for long-term storage, at an estimated cost of about \$100 each, Harvey said.

Currently, the agency only refrigerates corpses. It stopped embalming them about a dozen years ago because of the cost, Harvey said.

In February, the coroner's office discovered that rats had chewed a dozen of the 61 bodies placed on shelves in a cold-storage crypt inside a garage. The room is used to store bodies that have not been identified or whose relatives cannot be located.

The rats managed to chew through body bags, Harvey said. They made their home in boxes of cremated remains also stored in the room. The boxes, more than 1,000 of them, were sent to the state for handling on Monday, Harvey said.

Employees who saw the damage said the rats gnawed away toes, chewed limbs to the bone, and ate away portions of groins and faces.

"They even burrowed inside the (body) cavity," said Greg Myers, whose job includes draining fluids from the decomposing corpses and re-wrapping them.

The rodents may have moved to the coroner's facility during demolition of buildings in the adjacent Los Angeles County-USC Medical Center, Harvey said. The area also has ivy and many palm trees that are attractive to rats.

On Tuesday afternoon, the 5-foot-high shelves in the chilly stainless-steel room were packed with corpses, recently rewrapped in body bags. A black rat trap sat in one corner. Harvey said some of the gnawed corpses remained but others had been released after relatives were contacted.

BUSINESS CLASSES

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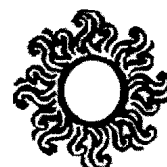


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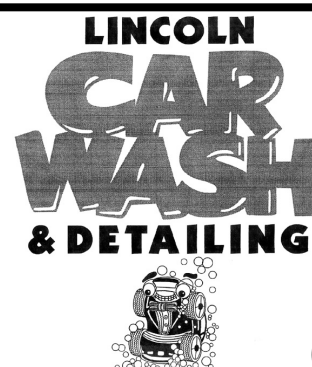
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Franklin Smith/Special to the Daily Press

Robert Fisk speaks to a packed house Saturday at Beyond Baroque.

Journalist Robert Fisk speaks to a packed house

BY FRANKLIN SMITH
Special to the Daily Press

Award winning British journalist Robert Fisk spoke to a packed house at Beyond Baroque in Venice Beach last Saturday.

Winner of the British "International Journalist of the Year" award seven times, Fisk has been covering the Middle East for more than 25 years. He also covered the Iranian revolution, the Iran-Iraq war, the battles in Lebanon and the Persian Gulf war.

Fisk is well known for championing Arab and Palestinian causes. He talked about the crisis in the Jenin refugee camp where large numbers of fatalities have been reported and relief workers and aid have been denied access. He

blamed the American press for poor coverage of the situation and Colin Powell for not visiting Jenin to witness what was going on there as he did at the site of a bus destroyed by a suicide bomber.

Fisk's coverage of Middle East events almost cost him his life when his car broke down in Pakistan last year. While attempting to push his car to the side of the road a crowd gathered and started pelting him with stones. Badly injured, he was rescued by a Muslim religious leader who escorted him to a police station.

Having recovered from his injuries, he gave a lively presentation to a captivated audience. Fisk's stories can be read at: http://news.independent.co.uk/middle_east.

Steelhead trout making a comeback in Malibu

By The Associated Press

MALIBU — Celebrity-soaked Malibu is welcoming the beleaguered southern steelhead trout.

The National Park Service this week is tearing down one of several small barriers blocking the wily fish from swimming up Solstice Creek into the Santa Monica Mountains. Thousands of steelhead once traveled from the mountains to the sea, and back again, in the area's streams.

There are at least 15 unique populations of steelhead along the West Coast and 11 of them have suffered serious declines in recent decades. The southern steelhead is the worst off with current estimates counting only a few hundred between the Santa Maria River in Santa Barbara County and San Mateo Creek in northern San Diego County.

"We know that Solstice Creek by itself isn't going to recover steelhead," park service resource specialist Ray Sauvajot

said. "But this is the kind of project that can serve as a model for similar efforts across Southern California."

Solstice Creek still has all the key ingredients the fish need: Cool, clean, year-round water in the shady creek, plenty of insects for food and protection from development.

Southern steelhead are rainbow trout, with a twist. Hatched in coastal streams, steelhead migrate to sea as adults and then, after one to four years, return to freshwater streams to spawn and die.

Two culverts, two small dams and a roadway now prevent the trip. The park service is replacing the roadway with a bridge and removing parts of the old dams; the California Department of Transportation plans to renovate Pacific Coast Highway and Corral Canyon Road culverts.

The project will cost about \$1.5 million and officials hope that it will be completed by December 2003.

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STATE □ NATIONAL

Police chief claims mayor, union conspired to oust him

BY PAUL WILBORN
Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — Police Chief Bernard C. Parks told the City Council Tuesday that a "conspiracy" between the mayor and police union led the Police Commission to turn him down for a second term last week.

"I believe that the system was corrupt from the beginning," Parks charged as he took his battle to the 15-member council, which has had only three members show support for reversing the Police Commission's decision against rehiring the chief.

Security was bolstered at City Hall for the council meeting, including mounted police patrols, but the crowd of perhaps 300 of Parks' supporters and opponents was orderly.

The issue of retaining Parks, the city's second black chief, has broken down along racial lines among political leaders. Mayor James Hahn, who is white, was elected last year with black support but angered black leaders when he came out against Parks.

The City Council, which was expected to consider a motion Wednesday on whether to intervene in the matter, debated for an hour before voting simply to allow Parks to speak.

The 37-year veteran stood before the council in his blue uniform with holstered sidearm, badge and four stars on each collar, and laid out his challenges and achievements since becoming chief in 1997, then attacked the review process as unfair.

Parks said Hahn told him on Jan. 30 that he already had three votes against him on the Police Commission even though the panel had not yet to begin a review process that was being publicly touted as merit-based.

The mayor-appointed commissioners, who serve as the department's civilian overseers, voted 4-1 against Parks on April 9.

Hahn also told him that he had sufficient votes on the City Council to prevent

his reappointment, Parks said.

Hahn refused to comment on Parks' allegations.

"What I've been saying all week is this is part of the process in the City Charter. The council has the right if they so choose to take jurisdiction of this matter.... I'm just going to leave that decision up to the City Council," he said in an interview.

Parks, who has hired well-known lawyer Gloria Allred to represent him, said he felt it was important to continue fighting for his job.

"I felt that if I had not continued in the process and instead retired I would be complicit in this conspiracy to unseat me," said Parks, who argued to the council that he met all the criteria set out by the commission for reappointment.

He said Hahn came out publicly against him on Feb. 6 and at the same time the Police Protective League launched an "intense television campaign."

"What is most questionable is where did the Protective League get the money to buy these television ads?" Parks asked.

The chief suggested that the union, which opposes Parks disciplinary methods and endorsed Hahn's 2001 election, used \$3.5 million in city money that was supposed to go toward providing attorneys for officers facing disciplinary proceedings.

Protective League President Mitzi Grasso denied Parks' claim.

She said the money for the \$400,000 television and print campaign came from the membership and fund-raisers and not from the \$3.5 million provided by the city.

"That was an inaccurate statement on his part," Grasso said.

The chief has accused his opponents on the Police Commission of running a smear campaign against him, although he has not announced any legal action.

Parks' predecessor, Willie Williams, the city's first black chief, also was denied a second term and threatened to sue. He settled for a severance package totaling more than \$300,000 and left office early.

Drug tunnel found under AZ parking lot near customs

BY ARTHUR H. ROTSTEIN
Associated Press Writer

TUCSON, Ariz. — Authorities found another drug tunnel near the border at Nogales, Ariz., this one ending in a parking lot close to one used by U.S. Customs Service employees.

The 85-foot tunnel found Monday was reinforced with two-by-fours and strung with bare light bulbs, said Customs spokesman Roger Maier. It came within inches of the surface.

In some spots, the top of the tunnel touched the bottom of the asphalt lining the parking lot, Maier said.

He said the tunnel had been in use for some time. No drugs were found inside.

Maier said investigators believe the tunnel operators punched a hole through the asphalt and would pass narcotics up into a waiting vehicle, and then seal the hole with a prefabricated asphalt plug.

Rain may have weakened the structure because a security guard noticed a slight

depression in the pavement over the weekend, and saw a tiny hole that opened to a larger cavity beneath, Maier said.

Maier said Customs officials using a backhoe exposed about the first 20 to 25 feet of the tunnel running north from a fence marking the U.S.-Mexico border. That portion runs under part of the Customs parking lot, including an entryway, he said.

The tunnel appears to zig and zag as it encounters obstructions heading north from the border, Maier said.

"Based on its proximity to International Street, we're guessing it originated in a wash on the Mexican side and ended in the parking lot," Maier said.

The tunnel is at least the ninth discovered in Nogales since 1995 and the second in the border city to run directly beneath the international boundary.

"It just shows that they're going to be tapping into whatever's available to them," said Santa Cruz County Sheriff Tony Estrada.

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INTERNATIONAL

Allies comb mountains for al-Qaida and Taliban

BY MICHELLE BOORSTEIN

Associated Press Writer

BAGRAM, Afghanistan — British troops have launched their first major combat operation of the Afghan conflict, joining U.S. and Afghan soldiers searching the snowcapped peaks of southeastern Afghanistan for al-Qaida and Taliban fighters, coalition officials said Tuesday.

Members of the elite 45 Commando Royal Marines were sent into the area several days ago but their mission was not made public until Tuesday.

The troops, who are skilled in mountain warfare, are operating at elevations above 9,500 feet, Royal Marines spokesman Lt. Col. Paul Harradine said. He would not specify where the force was deployed, but it was believed they were in rugged terrain south of the capital near the Pakistani border.

U.S. military spokesman Maj. Bryan Hilferty would not say how many American troops were in the area following up on last month's Operation Anaconda — a 12-day assault on Taliban and al-Qaida forces in the eastern Shah-e-Kot mountains.

At the Pentagon, Air Force Brig. Gen. John Rosa said the mission, which the British call Operation Ptarmigan after a bird that changes color to blend with the environment, began Monday.

Rosa said the deployment was part of the ongoing effort to destroy al-Qaida and Taliban remnants in southeastern Afghanistan. The U.S. military named the mission Operation Mountain Lion.

Harradine said coalition forces had suffered no casualties so far in the operation but would not say whether there had been any clashes with al-Qaida or the Taliban.

"This is a very specific mission, of which there will be more, to achieve that overall broad objective of dealing with residual Taliban and al-Qaida forces which remain in Afghanistan," Adam Ingram, Britain's minister for the armed forces, told the BBC.

Ingram said capturing al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden remains a prime objective, although his where-

abouts was unknown.

"We've got to operate on the basis that he's still alive, that he may well still be in the country, and if we do obtain knowledge of where he is then clearly we will pursue him with all vigor," Ingram said.

Despite on the ongoing military operations, Afghanistan's interim ruler, Hamid Karzai, flew to Rome to escort the country's former king home after 29 years in exile. The former monarch, Mohammad Zaher Shah, is expected in Kabul early Thursday.

Zaher Shah's return is widely seen as a major step toward national reconciliation after a generation of armed conflict. The king was to have returned March 23, but his homecoming was postponed because of security concerns.

A special police unit will coordinate 24-hour protection for the 87-year-old former ruler, with 50 officers stationed inside his house and 100 more taking up positions outside. Security forces have blocked off the only three streets leading to the residence with barbed wire and concrete barriers.

Zaher Shah has lived in Italy since he was ousted by his cousin, Mohammed Daoud Khan, in 1973. In June, the former king was to convene a loya jirga, or grand council, which will choose a new government to serve until elections can be held in 18 months.

"His majesty doesn't have any concerns. He is going to see his children, his countrymen and women," said his spokesman Hamid Sidiq. "He doesn't have any fears in this regard."

In Kandahar, U.S. officials said all personnel had been accounted for after confiscated Taliban weapons exploded accidentally at a demolition range Monday outside of the city.

Four soldiers were killed and a fifth was injured, but Pentagon officials had feared the casualty toll could rise because some personnel were missing. The Pentagon identified the dead as Staff Sgt. Brian T. Craig, 27, of Texas; Staff Sgt. Justin J. Galewski, 28, of Kansas; Sgt. Jamie O. Maugans, 27, of Kansas, and Sgt. 1st Class Daniel A. Romero, 30, of Colorado. Their hometowns

were not provided.

Craig, Galewski and Maugans were members of the 710th Explosive Ordnance Detachment based at San Diego. Romero was with the 19th Special Forces Group based at Pueblo, Colorado.



Frank Augstein/Associated Press

Honor guards carry the casket of a killed U.S. soldier from a C-17 Globemaster plane after its arrival from Afghanistan at Ramstein Airbase in southwestern Germany on Tuesday. The soldier was one of the four U.S. demolition specialists killed on Monday while blowing up suspected abandoned Taliban rockets near the southern Afghan city of Kandahar.

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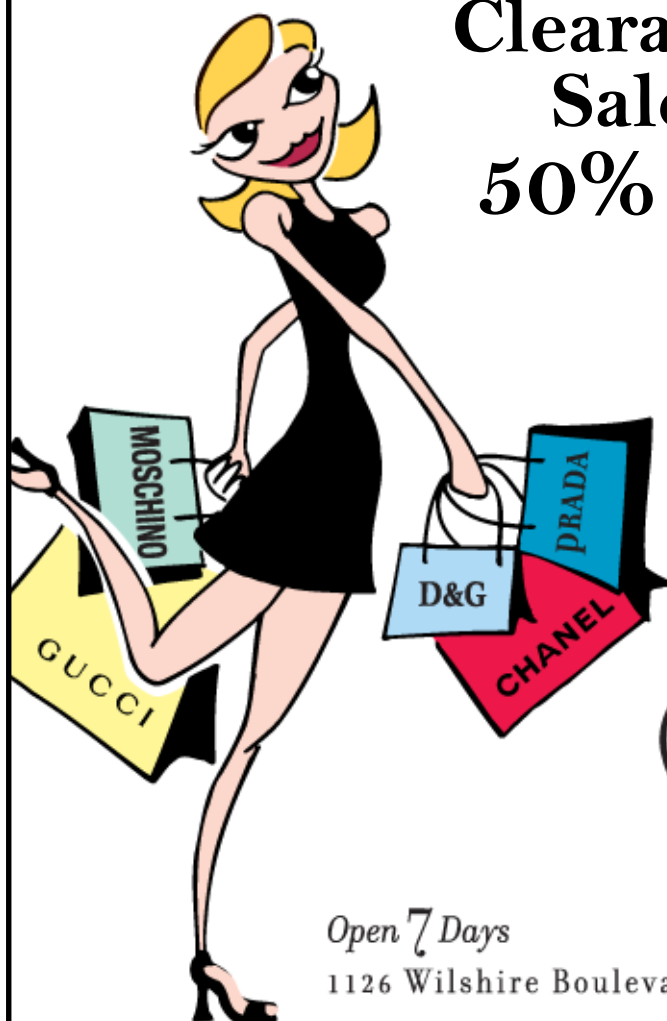
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INTERNATIONAL



Powell holds hope for some kind of cease-fire

BY BARRY SCHWEID

AP Diplomatic Writer

JERUSALEM — Secretary of State Colin Powell said Tuesday he is making progress in talks with Israel and Palestinian leaders and that he hopes to work out some kind of cease-fire within 24 hours.

Powell said it probably would be something less than a formal cease-fire, but he did not spell out what might be in the offing.

He met Tuesday one-on-one for an hour with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, their third get-together since Friday. Powell plans to see Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat for a second time Wednesday at his battered Ramallah headquarters, where Israeli troops have him confined.

"I'm going to have a good discussion with the prime minister," Powell said during a photo-taking session before the Sharon meeting when he was asked to elaborate on any progress he was making toward a cease-fire.

Meantime, Sharon's office said the prime minister would attend an international peace conference in the United States if one is convened by American officials. Powell proposed a June date if such a summit is called, said Sharon spokesman Raanan Gissin.

Gissin refused to say whether Sharon, as a condition of participating, would drop his demand that Arafat be excluded.

Earlier, Powell said he would return to the United States after a stop Wednesday in Cairo, Egypt. He plans to meet there with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, a key Arab moderate.

The focus of the talks is how to stop the fighting and security arrangements to maintain calm. Israeli officials said.

Israel wants assurances from the Palestinians they would assert control, but the Palestinians say the Israeli incursion has riddled their security apparatus, said the Israeli officials, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Israel's response is that there are enough Palestinian security forces to get the job done, the officials said.

U.S. and Palestinian officials were holding "good conversations," Powell

said before meeting with a group of Palestinian professionals.

"I think we are making progress and are looking forward to making more progress in the next 24 hours," he said.

However, Palestinian and U.S. officials failed to agree on a statement condemning suicide bombings and calling for an Israeli withdrawal from West Bank areas, said a senior Palestinian official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The United States objected to a Palestinian addition "calling for an end to Israel's occupation, for the establishment of the state of Palestine in the June 4, 1967, borders, with east Jerusalem as its capital, and a just solution for the refugee problem, with the needed mechanism to guarantee the implementation within an agreed timeline." That plan also would have asked additional action by the U.N. Security Council.

In Washington, presidential spokesman Ari Fleischer said Powell is exploring a number of avenues to create an environment in which political negotiations can begin. "He's hard at work and doing an excellent job at it," Fleischer said as White House officials were saying privately that Powell's reports to President Bush had become slightly more optimistic.

Nearing the end of his peace mission, Powell would like to nail down at least one solid gain. But Sharon has vowed to keep Israeli troops in Ramallah indefinitely and Arafat is hedging on his commitment to curb violence until Israel pulls out.

Powell has said his priority is securing a cease-fire and restarting security talks, although he also would like to get the two sides back to negotiating political issues such as borders, the fate of Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees and creation of a Palestinian state.

"We will maintain close contact with both sides in the coming days," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said Monday.

But that may be through senior U.S. officials, not Powell.

Bush, who hasn't spoken with Arafat, called Sharon on Monday.

In their 15-minute conversation,



Associated Press

In a still photo released by the Israel Defense Forces taken from an IDF video, Marwan Barghouti, center, is captured by Israeli soldiers at an undisclosed location on Monday. Israel captured Barghouti, a close aide to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on Monday. Marwan Barghouti is feared by many Israelis as a remorseless killer, but has attained the status of folk hero to most young Palestinians.

Sharon told Bush that Israeli troops would pull out of Jenin and Nablus within a week, Fleischer said. Sharon, in a CNN interview, said Israeli forces would remain indefinitely in Ramallah, where they surround Arafat's headquarters, and in Bethlehem until terrorists surrender.

Bush told Sharon that ending the siege at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem was one of Powell's most urgent priorities, Fleischer said.

Powell, searching for new ideas, also is considering an international or regional conference aimed at stopping Middle East violence and restarting Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.

"It's a way to get the parties together

and talking," Powell said.

Sharon suggested a conference to Powell at their meeting in Tel Aviv on Sunday, though Sharon objected to including Arafat.

A peace conference was rejected by the ruling party's newspaper in neighboring Syria as a "dirty maneuver." Al-Baath said Sharon's actions have "destroyed all possible chances to revive the pace process in the Middle East."

Hassan Abdel Rahman, the top Palestinian official in the United States, said Sharon should first stop his incursion into the West Bank. "Nothing can happen before that," he said in an interview from Washington.

American States leader launches Venezuela investigation

By The Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela — The chief of the Western Hemisphere's top diplomatic body urged Venezuelans on Tuesday to express dissent constitutionally instead of through coups, such as the botched one last weekend.

Cesar Gaviria, secretary general of the Organization of American States, met with President Hugo Chavez at the presidential palace, as did OPEC secretary general Ali Rodriguez. Markets have seen Chavez's return on Sunday as a sign that Venezuela — the third-largest supplier of oil to the United States — would continue its policy of restricting production and thus keep oil prices high.

Gaviria urged Venezuelans to find a way for "dissent to be expressed constitutionally," instead of through coups.

"Polarization has to give way to reconciliation and understanding," said Gaviria, who was also meeting with church and opposition leaders to prepare for an OAS General Assembly session this week on the Venezuelan crisis.

Friday's coup was condemned by many Latin American leaders, and the United States joined an OAS declaration authorizing Gaviria's mission. Washington on Monday welcomed Chavez's apparent call for reconciliation, though it had also warned him his government he had been given a rare second chance for "correcting its course and governing in a fully democratic manner."

The Bush administration expressed no regret last week when the Venezuelan military ousted Chavez, who angered Washington by befriending Cuba, Iraq and Libya and opposing the war in Afghanistan. At the time Chavez was removed, the White House put the blame on Chavez because of his attempts to violently put down a demonstration on Thursday. Chavez, the elected president, was reinstated by loyalist officers on Sunday.

On Tuesday, the U.S. government denied a report that U.S. officials had given purported coup plotters a go-ahead wink. "We explicitly told opposition leaders the United States would not support a coup," White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said.

Chavez, for his part, has said the plot originated in Venezuela.

Gaviria said he was considering what the OAS could do "to assure itself that episodes like what we saw in recent days are not repeated in Venezuela."

The trouble began when Venezuela's largest business and labor groups called a general strike last week to support an oil workers' protest against bosses appointed by Chavez. Dissident oil executives virtually choked production in Venezuela.

On Thursday, hundreds of thousands marched on the presidential palace to denounce Chavez. Gunfire and rioting erupted, and at least 65 people were killed in sub-

sequent violence. Hundreds were wounded.

Officers rebelled, arrested Chavez, and installed an interim president until another popular uprising — this time by Chavez supporters — induced the military to replace him.

Pedro Carmona, the interim president, is under house arrest and faces possible charges of rebellion and usurping authority.

Vice President Diosdado Cabello said 80 soldiers were in custody, though Chavez blamed the coup's planning on a group of "oligarchs" whom he has not identified.

Ten Venezuelans were inside the Bolivian Embassy in Caracas, seeking asylum. They included former Air Force Col. Pedro Soto, who was expelled from the armed forces earlier this year after calling for Chavez's resignation, said Ambassador Ricardo Guillermo Telchi Orellana.

Chavez met separately Tuesday with Ali Rodriguez, OPEC secretary general and a former Venezuelan oil minister.

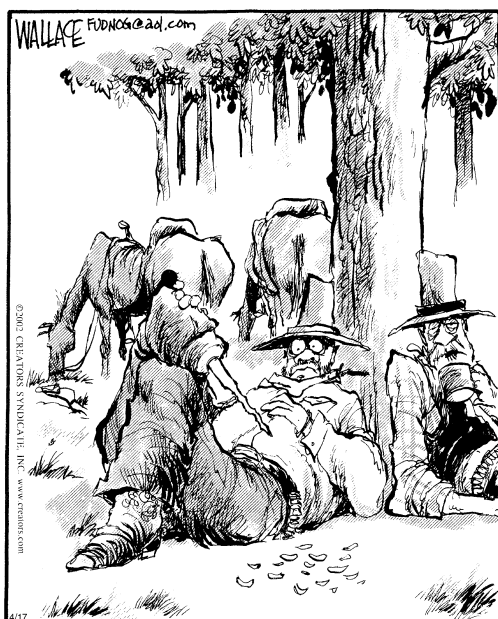
Oil prices rose after Chavez's reinstatement. Venezuela's state-owned oil monopoly Petroleos de Venezuela SA said Tuesday the 950,000 barrel-per-day Paraguana refinery, the largest in the hemisphere, was back to normal output. Venezuela is the world's fourth-largest oil producer.

COMICS

The Dinette Set by Julie Larson



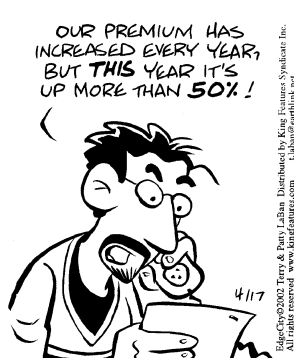
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2 Day off
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4 Composer Rota
5 Binary digit
6 Genealogy chart
7 Slugger Maris
8 Stun
9 Reacted in fright
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24 Carryall
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31 Arrive
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36 Zilch
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4-17

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NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

'Cyborg' professor sues for damaged equipment

University of Toronto professor Steve Mann, 39, has for 20 years worn computer components on his body for ongoing research and even calls himself a cyborg, and carries enough documentation that he had never (even after Sept. 11) caused problems with airport security. (He wears computerized glasses and headgear and an electronic body suit; is constantly connected to the Internet; can see behind him; and can "feel" items across a room.) However, on Feb. 18, officials at St. John's, Newfoundland, airport would not let him board for two days while searching and testing him and making background checks. When they OK'd him on Feb. 20, about \$50,000 worth of his equipment had been broken, and he was bleeding from having his chest electrodes removed. Two weeks later, Mann filed a lawsuit against Air Canada and Canada's transportation authority.

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BACK PAGE

Mayor's magnetism continues; corruption trial approaches

BY SIOBHAN MCDONOUGH

Associated Press Writer

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Described as a workaholic, charismatic, and a snazzy dresser to boot, the colorful six-term mayor of Providence still manages to warm the hearts of Rhode Islanders even as he faces federal corruption charges.

"Mayor Cianci will be re-elected from a jail cell if that's what it comes to — that's how much we love him," said Providence restaurateur Robert I. Burke. "People love him because he surrounds himself with an aura of power that's mixed with a hint of danger."

Mayor Vincent A. Cianci Jr. — nicknamed "Buddy" by friends and foes alike — has already made it known he's interested in a seventh term despite the indictments.

Cianci and three others face charges of racketeering and soliciting bribes for city contracts and jobs. Cianci's chief of staff is scheduled to go on trial at a later date.

The mayor has maintained his innocence on all 29 counts.

On Tuesday, a judge denied a request by defense attorneys to suppress some five hours of videotape in which the former Tax Board Chairman, one of the men arrested along with Cianci, makes incriminating statements and boasts about his connections to the mayor.

This allows the trial to start on Wednesday as scheduled with jury selection.

Even an indictment and possible conviction don't seem to diminish the appeal of the 60-year-old Cianci, who has carved out a role as a polished politician, quick-witted and amusing to watch, with a knack for reforming a formerly downtrodden city.

"People cut Cianci considerable slack just because of his personal charisma," said Darrell West, a Brown

University political science professor. "He's a strong leader who has produced good results and so people offset the corruption issue."

It's not the first time the mayor has been embroiled in a court battle.

"Mayor Cianci will be re-elected from a jail cell if that's what it comes to — that's how much we love him."

— ROBERT I. BURKE
Restaurateur

Cianci was first elected mayor in 1974. He left office in 1984 in the middle of his third term after a conviction on assault charges. After a stint as a radio talk-show host, he was re-elected in 1990.

"The average person in Rhode Island understands that being in politics is like being in the lane at the NBA final games in the last three minutes. There are some elbows going to be thrown, some pushing," said Burke.

"That's how politics is played here everyday, and Cianci plays the game better than anyone," he said.

A Brown University poll released in January showed that 63 percent of registered voters surveyed believe Cianci is doing a good or excellent job, up from 61 percent in September.

At the same time, 50 percent said they didn't think Cianci was an honest person. The poll surveyed 461 registered voters and had a margin of error of plus or minus 5 percentage points. It was conducted from Jan. 26-28.

Much of Cianci's appeal comes from the creation of Waterplace Park, a system of canals and brick walkways formed by rerouting two rivers. Iron pedestrian bridges and gondola rides give the area a Venice-like atmosphere. The city also has an arts and entertainment district where artists who live and work in new loft studios get tax breaks.

Other projects include a \$460 million shopping mall, a \$350 million convention center and hotel, a new skating rink and more than \$300 million in transportation improvements.

Cianci's charm or successes aren't good enough for Harold Meyer III, who wants Cianci to resign. Meyer leads a group he's dubbed the Rhode Island Citizens for Ethical Government.

"He takes credit for a lot of things he really didn't do," Meyer said. "He tarnishes the office, and enables other corruption. It's disgusting."

Steve Stamatis, 40, is one of those city residents who will support the mayor no matter what dark cloud hovers over him.

"People will like Cianci no matter what — look at Clinton," said Stamatis, owner of a downtown restaurant. "People in America are willing to forget."

Some people say the controversies, allegations and impending court proceedings must be patiently weighed with his track record in revitalizing a city dubbed "The Renaissance City" for its comeback.

"There was a time when it was dismal and unwelcoming in the city of Providence — it was the poster child of urban decay," said Burke. "We call it a renaissance city, but it's more like a resurrection that occurred here."

Some of the mayor's foes aren't impressed enough. "I don't like him," said Andy Schrader, 34, of Providence. "There have been a lot of scandals. We need someone more honest and trustworthy."

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