

FREE

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Santa Monica Daily Press

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Officials predict voters will pass education tax

ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

At least two Santa Monica officials are confident that local voters would pass a 250 percent increase in the city's parcel tax to offset the school district's looming multi-million dollar budget shortfall.

"I think this is a community that values good education," said Santa Monica City Councilman Ken Genser. "And I think there is a very good chance voters will approve it."

"I know I would vote in favor of it, at least," Julia Brownley, president of the Santa Monica-Malibu United School District Board, said she too is confident the community would okay the tax.

"Do we need to organize a group and get some money together for a political campaign? Absolutely," she said. "But as far as I know...this

area is very supportive of education, and will support a parcel tax increase."

Both officials cited the success of the March 5 ballot measure overwhelmingly approved by voters that will provide \$160 million for improvements to Santa Monica College.

During the next two budget years, the school district is facing a more than \$5 million deficit, mostly from cuts in state funding and increases in expenses.

In an April 17 memo to the school board, Superintendent John Deasy proposed asking the two cities in the district for \$2.25 million more in funding, as well as asking voters for the parcel tax increase, which would take place over three years.

Brownley said she supports Deasy's recommendations.

See TAX, page 3

Group recommends more police on the Promenade

Bans on hacky sacks and feeding the homeless delayed for the time being

BY ANDREW H. FIXMER
Daily Press Staff Writer

A business group recommended Thursday that more police be deployed along the Third Street Promenade.

However, the group declined to act on proposals that would have banned feeding the

homeless and allowing transients to pile their belongings on the Promenade, as well as banning playing with balls or hacky sacks.

The recommendations come from a committee set up by the Bayside District Corporation to study ways of increasing safety and controlling the homeless population along the Promenade. The committee, which consists of Bayside board members and business leaders, finalized its recommendations for the full board Thursday afternoon.

The committee said the two full-time police officers currently assigned to the Promenade

See PROMENADE, page 4

Abercrombie & Fitch makes 'wong' decision on T-shirts

By staff and wire reports

SAN FRANCISCO — Clothier Abercrombie & Fitch is pulling a line of T-shirts that triggered protests from Asian groups who said they reinforced negative stereotypes.

The T-shirts, some of which show smiling men with slanted eyes and conical hats, were being pulled from all of the company's 311 stores in 50 states, company spokesman

Hampton Carney said Thursday.

However, at the Santa Monica store, employees were re-stocking the T-shirts on Thursday afternoon. While employees said they couldn't comment, some said they thought the matter was much ado about nothing.

"People are so sensitive," one employee said. "It's silly."

But the company's official comment is an

See T-SHIRTS, page 3



Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press

Gisi Stupp, a Feng Shui expert, sensed immediately that the "chi" was blocked at the amusement park on the Santa Monica Pier.

'Chi' flow to be improved at Pier amusement park

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

In true California fashion, visitors to the amusement park on the Santa Monica Pier soon will be able to officially go with the flow.

Gisi Stupp, owner of Santa Monica-based Feng Shui Services, outlined a plan this month for Pacific Park that will put its numerous rides and attractions in the right place.

Pacific Park administrators have allocated thousands of dollars to rid the park of its bad "chi," which mostly lived near the west entrance.

"Chi" ("chee") is a force of invisible energy that circulates through surroundings and the senses. Feng Shui ("fung shway") is the traditional Chinese method of assessing and influencing indoor and outdoor environments. Feng Shui experts look at how chi moves around an area, then decide how to maximize the chi's positive effect.

When the park opened in 1996, little thought was given to the energy pattern on the two-acre site, which is crammed with 12 rides,

19 midway games and seven restaurants.

"They did the best they could at the time," said Pacific Park's spokesman Cameron Andrews.

"The mouth of the chi is blocked. It's just not inviting — the energy has to mingle."

— GISI STUPP
Feng Shui expert

Stupp sensed immediately the chi was messed up and not inviting. Specifically she found that the west entrance obstructs the energy flow because the airplane ride is situated smack dab in the middle,

See CHI, page 4

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♈ ARIES (March 21-April 19)
★★★★ Indulge yourself, as well as others. If you can, work from home and don't push beyond your limits. You'll see that a relaxed day fits the bill, even if you have a lot of ground to cover. Count on flourishing in the present atmosphere. Tonight: Why move? Happy at home.

♉ TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★★ Whatever you do appears to be perfect. Others naturally respond to your efforts and go out of their way for you. Use timing. Ask the boss for a raise or ask that special person out. You'll like the results. Tonight: Let another know that you appreciate him or her.

♊ GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★★ You might feel ill at ease over a personal matter. Be clear and direct with your dealings involving a loved one or friend. If you feel the need to clarify feelings — there's no time like the present. Make that extra effort toward a friend or loved one. Tonight: Shop for a card.

♋ CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★★★ A friendship could be developing into a lot more. Don't push so hard to have another think like you or approach a situation as you would like. Let events happen. Let feelings build. Success greets you as a result. Tonight: Your wish is another's command.

♌ LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★ Assume a lower profile than normal. You could feel a bit overwhelmed by what is going on with another. Listen to a boss or older relative. This person has key feedback. Go out of your way to touch base with another who might not be feeling up to snuff. Tonight: Continue being mysterious.

♍ VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★★★ Success comes from many people or meetings. Be willing to work in groups. You might not have all the answers, but you certainly know how to find them. A brainstorming session provides more options than you considered. Tonight: Hop out the door. Join your pals.

♎ LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★★★ Take charge at work if you have any thought of leaving at a normal time this afternoon. You find that an associate does a reversal when you least expect it. Relax with immediate information. Know what you're seeking. Tonight: Are you ready to be the lead actor? Spotlights, please.

♏ SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★★ Your mind certainly isn't present, as you might already be "gone" for the weekend. Why not cut your losses and clear your desk, answer your e-mail and head on out the door? Network if you must stay in the office. Someone finds you to be unusually appealing. Tonight: Split town, if you can.

♐ SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★★★ If another could part the waters for you, he or she would! You can count on another's follow-through right now. Ask for more of what you need from those in your daily life. You find their responses to be overwhelming. You might not have realized how popular you are. Tonight: Opt to be with a special friend.

♑ CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★★ You might have work on your mind, but others do their best to distract you. Use some of this jovial Friday spirit to add a creative spark to your work. Make a possibility happen rather than nixing opportunity. Your popularity soars. Tonight: Play away.

♒ AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★★ Take a hint from Aries' message. You, too, might be happier working from home. Express your profound happiness when dealing with another. Your positive and appreciative manner takes you very far in your dealings. Don't underestimate what a compliment means. Tonight: Make it easy.

♓ PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★★ Your imagination won't hear "no" right now. You will find that if you present your suggestions in a soft, un confrontational manner, you'll get the type of results you would like. Take a leisurely lunch. Relax with an associate. Tonight: Be a romantic.

QUOTE of the DAY

**"I'm going to Boston to see my doctor.
He's a very sick man."**
— Fred Allen (1894-1956)

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LOCAL

Abercrombie's ad campaign a source of controversy

T-SHIRTS, from page 1

apologetic one.

"We're very, very, very sorry," Carney said. "It's never been our intention to offend anyone."

A group Asian-American activists in Northern California still planned to protest in front of the company's downtown San Francisco store Thursday evening, said community organizer Jane Kim, who was helping to organize the event. Others still were circulating e-mails urging people to complain to the company.

"It's great that they're removing them so quickly," Kim said, but "a lot of damage has already been done in terms of the negative and racist cartoon images they put out on Asian-Americans."

"A lot of people are still angry that it happened at all," she said. "We really want to make sure they actually do some positive work to counteract the negative images."

Carney could not say how many of the T-shirts would be pulled from stores, or how much the recall would cost the New Albany, Ohio-based casual sportswear company. The T-shirts, which went on sale in some stores Friday for \$24.50, also will be removed from the company's Web site, Carney said.

"These graphic T-shirts were designed with the sole purpose of adding humor and levity to our fashion line," Carney said. "Since some of our customers have been offended by their content, we are pulling these shirts from our stores."

One of the company's T-shirts reads "Wong Brothers Laundry Service — Two Wongs Can Make It White." Another features a smiling Buddha figure with the slogan "Abercrombie and Fitch Buddha Bash — Get Your Buddha on the Floor." Another reads "Wok-N-Bowl — Let the Good Times Roll — Chinese Food & Bowling."

The activists want the company to show more positive images of Asian-Americans and other minorities in advertising campaigns.

They plan to send a letter to Abercrombie making those requests, and also potentially asking it to fund programs in Asian-American communities and release statistics on diversity levels in upper management, she said.

Some Stanford University students also planned to attend the protest. Michael Chang, vice chair of the Asian American Students' Association, called removal of the shirts from stores "a good first step." But he also hopes the company will provide an explanation of "our point of view, not their point of view," he said.

Chang and others say the T-shirts are particularly hurtful because they poke fun at a period in history when laundry and restaurant work were among the few employment opportunities available to Chinese because of discrimination.

"When you're looking at an extreme and old stereotype of an entire culture, an entire history of struggling," Chang said, "it's hard to think about what would make



Photo by Daily Press

The design of this T-shirt, for sale on the Third Street Promenade on Thursday, has drawn protests from Asians.

that funny."

He wants the company to introduce other, "more intelligent, more forward-looking T-shirts," that provide a "more balanced, realistic view of Asians."

Carney said the company received about 60 complaints Wednesday about the shirts. Abercrombie makes fun of everyone, Carney said, noting the company's previous clothing designs have included football coaches, snow skiers and Irish-Americans.

It's not the first time the company, which targets 18 to 22-year-old college

students, has come under fire. Last year, women's organizations and conservative politicians rallied against the company for its ads featuring young, barely clad models in sexually suggestive poses.

Still, some were not bothered by the new T-shirts.

"I don't know why anyone should be angry or upset," Lisa Tan, 20, told the San Jose Mercury News. Tan stood in line Wednesday with her cousin, Stephanie Wu, both Chinese Americans, to buy a blouse. "It's a fun shirt."

City facing 'some very tough choices,' councilman says

TAX, from page 1

"We've been kind of preparing for this process," Brownley said. "We are not in a crisis. We have been anticipating this for some time now, and we will be able to work through it."

The current parcel tax is \$101.14. With the proposed increase, it would jump to \$360.14.

Making matters worse for the school district, the state continues to lower the amount of money it pays for education.

On Tuesday, it lowered the amount of its annual funding increase from an estimated 2.15 percent to 1.8 percent, costing the school district nearly \$300,000. Then on Thursday, the state increased the amount the school district will have to pay into its employees' retirement plan from 12 percent to 25 percent.

Deasy said he now believes the \$2.5 million gap in funding for next year's programs is "optimistic," and will likely increase as the state further decreases education funding.

The state is set to reassess how its limited funding will be divided up in May.

It is believed that money earmarked for education will be used by the state to cover expenses incurred from last year's energy crisis and the fallout from the current business recession.

District officials said Santa Monica is in the bottom 25

"I wouldn't think we could find the kind of money they are looking for."

— KEN GENSER

Santa Monica City Councilman

percent of cities with parcel taxes. If the proposed increase is approved, the school district would average in the middle of all districts statewide.

Parcel taxes are similar to property taxes. However, each property owner pays the same parcel tax, whereas property taxes usually are based on the estimated value of

the property.

Of cities with parcel taxes, Santa Monica has some of the lowest per pupil funding, school district officials said. A student attending the school district receives about \$258 from parcel tax revenue.

Deasy said Santa Monica is getting off light with a \$3 million donation. The city of Beverly Hills, for example, pays \$6 million to its school district, which is half the size of Santa Monica's.

However, Santa Monica is having its own budget problems. The current business recession and the fallout in tourism since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks has left the city short \$8.8 million in sales tax revenue.

Santa Monica officials said they have known about the school district's upcoming budget difficulties, but they aren't sure if the city afford more than the \$3 million it already provides.

"I wouldn't think we could find the kind of money they are looking for, but you never know what's going to happen," Genser said. "We truly have some very tough choices in front of us."



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LOCAL

Bayside to debate adding more Promenade police

PROMENADE, from page 1

can't handle the volume of violations
and perceived crimes being committed
everyday.

"I think we really need to beef up
police deployment on the Promenade,"
said Ruth Elwell, a Bayside board mem-
ber. "Things are getting sloppy down
there."

At the center of the committee's con-
cerns was a small group of transients and
young adults who gather daily in the cen-
ter court — located in the middle of the
Promenade across from the food court —
and hang out for hours.

Bayside officials said the group leaves
behind large amounts of litter and blocks
pedestrian access to center court when
they play hacky sack, a game where play-
ers pass a small bean bag to each other
using any body part other than their hands.

"Objects in the air under no means of
control make me very uncomfortable,"
said Patricia Hoffman, a Bayside board
member. "You expect that at a park, but
not on a pedestrian walkway."

But after much debate, committee
members decided to delay recommending
a ban on all ball play along the Promenade
until other proposals, including removing
benches and creating a tent in center court
that would rotate featuring different city
restaurants, were attempted first.

"We would have such a difficult time
and the city attorney would have such a
difficult time getting something like this
approved by the city council," said Art
Harris, a Bayside member. "I think we
would have a real difficult effort for very
little reform down the road."

Committee members were also con-
cerned with the center court group and
other individuals bringing large bags of
personal items and leaving them in the
public's way.

At a meeting earlier this month, city
attorney Marsh Moutrie said it was
unclear how preventing people from set-
ting their bags down for long periods of

time could be enforced.

Regardless, committee members voted
to ask Moutrie to investigate the feasibili-
ty of implementing such a law. Business
owners said they would like to see an ordi-
nance in place by the summer, if possible.

And committee members said they
would still pursue moving public feedings
of the homeless to designated areas off the
Promenade. They discussed possibly meet-
ing with the non-profit charities that con-
duct the feedings to find a compromise.

**"Things are getting
sloppy down there."**

— RUTH ELWELL

Bayside Corporation board member

"I think we make it clear to them we
are not against this," said Harris. "We just
want this to take place in one area rather
than along the entire Promenade."

Kathleen Rawson, executive director of
Bayside, said the committee would meet
with the city's homeless services director
on how to proceed with moving the feed-
ings and working with the charities.

The committee's recommendations
will then go before the full Bayside board
for a vote on April 25.

If the full board approves the commit-
tee's recommendations they would be
passed on to the city council, which
would decide whether to make the neces-
sary budget increases to fund hiring new
officers for the Promenade.

The Bayside District Corporation is a
public-private management company in
partnership with the City of Santa
Monica, charged with the responsibility
of overseeing public safety, security, and
maintenance of streets surrounding the
Promenade, including the alleys and the
six city-owned parking structures.

Amusement park 'chi' blocked by airplane ride

CHI, from page 1

blocking people from moving freely into the park.

"The mouth of the chi is blocked," Stupp said. "It's just not inviting — the ener-
gy has to mingle."

As a result, Pacific Park officials will move the entrance a few feet to the north,
as well as move around some of the rides in an attempt to "balance, harmonize and
open" up the area.

"It will enhance everything and it's so subtle," said Stupp, who has been Feng
Shui-ing for 20 years.

Other subtle changes to make it more inviting include painting murals of fish and
draping rope on the entrance frame and on the pillars.

"We are going to wake it up," Stupp said.

Stupp's service cost between \$300 and \$500. The Feng Shui makeover is part of
\$200,000 in improvements planned for Pacific Park before the summer season,
which include a new ride.

It is believed that by understanding and respecting the energy flows in the envi-
ronment, the surroundings will lead to greater serenity and effectiveness, Stupp said.
Some business owners have Feng Shui'd their offices and have reported increased
revenues.

Although Feng Shui is more commonly used in homes and offices by assessing
the "intangible energy," outside areas can be Feng Shui'd by addressing its "tangi-
ble energy." Tangible energy is what already is there — and the best way to address
Pacific Park's issues was to restructure the layout to create a "new energy flow,"
she said.

STATE



LA mayor says secession 'destroys the dream of L.A.'

BY ERICA WERNER
Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — Secession movements that would break away three parts of the nation's second-largest city would "destroy the dream of Los Angeles," Mayor James Hahn said in his State of the City address Thursday.

"Breaking apart this city destroys our identity," Hahn told a gathering at James Monroe High School in the San Fernando Valley, one of the areas that secessionists are trying to carve out as a separate city.

The breakaway efforts in the valley, Hollywood and the harbor area loom as the next major battle for Hahn. The Local Agency Formation Commission is expected to decide next month whether to schedule secession votes.

"Breaking apart Los Angeles won't provide one dime of additional money to a new city and it will leave our remaining city wounded," the mayor said.

"The reality is that a breakup is going to create more bureaucracy, more politicians, fewer resources and diminished services. Secession is not a solution.

Working together to fill our dreams, meeting our shared goals, that's a solution," he said.

"Together we can move forward. Divided we destroy the progress we've made and destroy the dream of Los Angeles."

Johnny Grant, a director of the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce, reacted cautiously.

"I don't like divorce and I would certainly hate to see this long marriage break up in divorce. But we have got to evaluate everything," said Grant, who is known as the honorary mayor of Hollywood and has long presided over Walk of Fame ceremonies.

City Council President Alex Padilla, who represents a valley district, applauded the mayor's assessment.

"I think he did an excellent job of outlining secession for what it really is. Clearly the lines have been drawn and it's imperative that we fight the secession movement with every bone in our body. ... That will now be the focus from now on," Padilla said.

Insult wasn't slanderous, state appeals court says

By The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — It's not nice, but it's also not slanderous to call someone a "skank" on the air.

A state appeals court this week dismissed a slander lawsuit filed against a radio station by a contestant who appeared on the Fox television show "Who Wants to Marry a Multimillionaire."

Jennifer Seelig sued San Francisco radio station KLLC-FM after Vincent Crackhorn, co-host of KLLC's "Sarah and Vinnie" morning show called her a "local loser," a "chicken butt" and said her ex-husband had called her a "big skank." He made the comments the day the Fox show aired in February 2000, after Seelig declined an interview with the station.

The Court of Appeal on Tuesday said Seelig had no cause to sue because she had invited media scrutiny when she agreed to appear on "Who Wants to Marry a Multimillionaire." It said Crackhorn's comments merely were an expression of opinion.

The court also ruled Seelig must pay the legal fees of the station and its employees under a state law that penalizes suits that seek to squelch free speech.

Subscribers say L.A. Times' Middle East coverage slanted

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — About 1,000 people have suspended their subscriptions to the Los Angeles Times, claiming the newspaper has tilted its coverage of unrest in the Middle East in favor of the Palestinian movement.

Times officials said they began receiving numerous calls Monday about their reporting of the Middle East conflict. About 900 calls were logged Wednesday, but not all of the people requested suspensions.

The protest reportedly was organized in the local Jewish community and was timed to correspond with Tuesday's 54th anniversary of Israeli independence.

Dr. Joe Englanoff, a physician at UCLA Medical Center, said the Southern California Jewish community began talking about a protest against the newspaper several weeks ago.

"There's a feeling in the community that The Times clearly has been one-sided and biased in its reporting about the

Middle East. People in the Jewish community want to express their anger," Englanoff said.

**"Our goal is to provide
coverage that is both fair
and complete."**

— JOHN CARROLL
L.A. Times editor

Times Editor John Carroll said that the newspaper has devoted a large staff of reporters and photographers to report on the Middle East tensions.

"Our goal is to provide coverage that is both fair and complete," he said. "We feel that we serve our readership by covering all aspects and points of view."

The Times said about 1,000 subscriptions had been suspended, one-tenth of 1 percent of the paper's total daily circulation of slightly more than 1 million.

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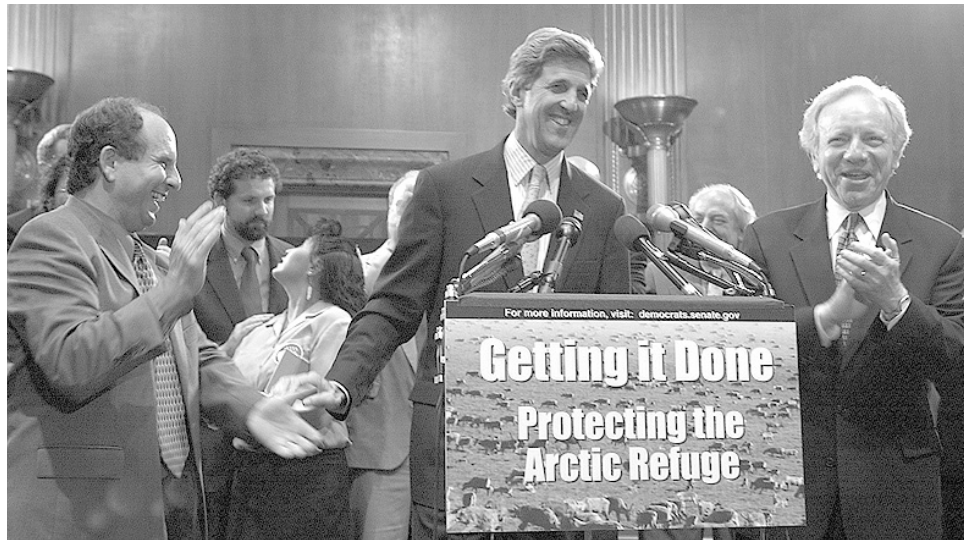
Pacific Park

The Family Amusement Park on the Santa Monica Pier



NATIONAL

Drilling denied



Dennis Cook/Associated Press

Democratic senators celebrate the defeat on Capitol Hill Thursday, of a bill which would have allowed oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Appearing at a victory rally are, left to right, Sen. Paul Wellstone, D-Minn., Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., and Sen. Joe Lieberman, D-Conn.

Trading card series made to portray Sept. 11 victims

BY MIKE SCHNEIDER

Associated Press Writer

MIAMI — A Florida businessman is creating a series of trading cards based on the lives of people killed in the Sept. 11 attacks, an enterprise some victims' families call crass but others have embraced.

About 20 families gave Kingsley Barham, former stockbroker from Delray Beach, Fla., biographic information and photographs of their relatives who died in the attacks to use on the cards.

"It shows what we lost as a nation and the world," Barham said. "People don't have an idea what they lost. Collectively the cards can tell the story of what we lost."

After initially considering the cards as tasteless, Lynn Faulkner said Thursday he saw them as a way to honor his wife, Wendy, who died while attending a meeting at the World Trade Center.

Danielle Lemack, who lost her mother

on American Airlines Flight 11, said if contacted she would refuse to provide information for a trading card.

"I think this is an atrocious way to 'honor' the people who tragically were lost on that day," she said.

Barham's company, Chestnut Publications, has produced cards for hemp and medical marijuana. He said he didn't think those would sell after the terrorist attacks.

He started contacting families this spring and reached more than 80, with 20 submitting information. He is trying to reach others and does not plan to create cards of the hijackers.

The families will have final say over the text printed on each card, Barham said.

Barham's company will send out prototypes next week to retailers. A price hasn't been set, but would be \$2.50-\$3 a pack. Family members will get 8 percent of gross revenues, Barham said.

Relatives of those aboard Flight 93 say there was 'screaming' on cockpit tape

BY SHEILA HOTCHKIN

Associated Press Writer

PLAINSBORO, N.J. —

With grief counselors on hand, relatives of those who died aboard United Flight 93 heard a cockpit recording Thursday that included "yelling and screaming" just before the hijacked plane crashed in a Pennsylvania field Sept. 11.

Thomas Burnett, whose son Tom was among the four people who used cell phones to call out before they were killed, said he heard the cries as he and about 100 other relatives listened to the chilling tape.

"A lot of it we couldn't follow very well," Burnett said.

The listening session, held behind closed doors, marked the first time the government let relatives of any U.S. plane crash hear cockpit tapes. Most family members said nothing afterward.

"Today is a very bitter-sweet day," said Hamilton Peterson, whose father, Donald, died in the crash. "Obviously, the enormity of the tragedy is here but it's a very proud moment."

Peterson said he learned things from the tape that he did not know before, but declined to elaborate.

Flight 93 has taken on special meaning since Sept. 11. It was the only one of the four hijacked

planes that day that didn't kill anyone on the ground, and there is evidence those aboard tried to fight back after one cried "Let's roll!"

Forty-four passengers and crew members were killed when the airliner, bound from Newark to San Francisco, crashed in rural western Pennsylvania. Many have speculated that the passengers kept the hijackers from plunging the jet into a populated target.

The cockpit tape was played in the morning for families of the crew and in the afternoon for passengers' relatives, with time left for discussion and questions. No reporters were allowed in and officials were under orders not to talk.

The 31-minute tape recorded in a continuous loop, but officials have declined to offer details on its contents.

Alice Hoglan of Los Gatos, Calif., said she knew the contents would be disturbing. Her son, Mark Bingham, was one of the passengers hailed as heroes for vowing to take on the hijackers moments before the crash.

Hoglan said she was told families would hear a woman pleading for her life, and the last five to seven minutes would be filled with violence and yelling in both Arabic and

English.

"Still, I feel compelled to listen. I owe it to the memory of Mark to learn all I can," the former United flight attendant said before she went inside.

Some relatives came but decided against listening to the tape. Among them was Mitchell Zykofski, whose stepfather John Talalighani died in the crash.

"They said it was very graphic detail of what went on in the cockpit. They said it was horrifying," he said. "That was enough for me to decide that I didn't want to hear it."

Zykofski said he didn't regret coming. "I wanted to come to represent my stepfather, who died needlessly, and also as a hero," Zykofski said.

The National Transportation Safety Board, which investigates aviation accidents, had never before allowed relatives to listen to cockpit tapes. Federal law bars the agency from giving out transcripts until most factual reports are complete.

FBI Director Robert Mueller approved the unprecedented listening sessions at the request of family members.

In phone conversations from the plane, Bingham and Burnett, of San Ramon, Calif., and two other men spoke of fighting back against their suicidal kidnappers. The others were Todd Beamer of Cranbury and Jeremy Glick of Hewlett.

Attorney General John Ashcroft has called the passengers' actions "the most dramatic of the heroic acts" of Sept. 11 and its aftermath.

Tom Crowley, Glick's uncle, said he knew two other Flight 93 passengers besides his nephew: Joseph Deluca of Ledgewood and Linda Gronlund of Greenwood Lake, N.Y. He is convinced they also fought back against the hijackers.

"Knowing them as I do, I know they would have gone and gotten involved," Crowley said before the sessions. "I know there are many other people who would have done the same thing. I think we have to think of all the people on Flight 93 as heroes."

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NATIONAL



Mother denied custody of child used as heroin mule

By The Associated Press

NEW YORK — A family court judge rejected a mother's plea for custody of her 12-year-old son while he awaits trial on charges he swallowed 87 heroin-filled condoms before flying to the United States from Nigeria.

Prince Nnaedozie Umegbolu might flee if Judge Marybeth Richroath said Wednesday in denying custody to Alissa Walden of Norcross, Ga. She also denied a request to let the boy and his mother meet in the courtroom, saying it would present a security risk.

The boy's father, Chukwunwieke Umegbolu, is imprisoned on a 1995 conviction for his role in a drug ring that imported at least \$33 million in heroin into Georgia over a decade.

Authorities said Prince swallowed the heroin-filled condoms a few days before beginning his 17-hour trip to New York on April 10, but became sick before meeting someone who had promised him \$1,900 to act as a courier.

Charges against the boy, now in Juvenile Justice Department custody, include possession of a controlled substance and possession of heroin with intent to distribute.

Prosecutor John Queenan said Wednesday that Prince had demonstrated

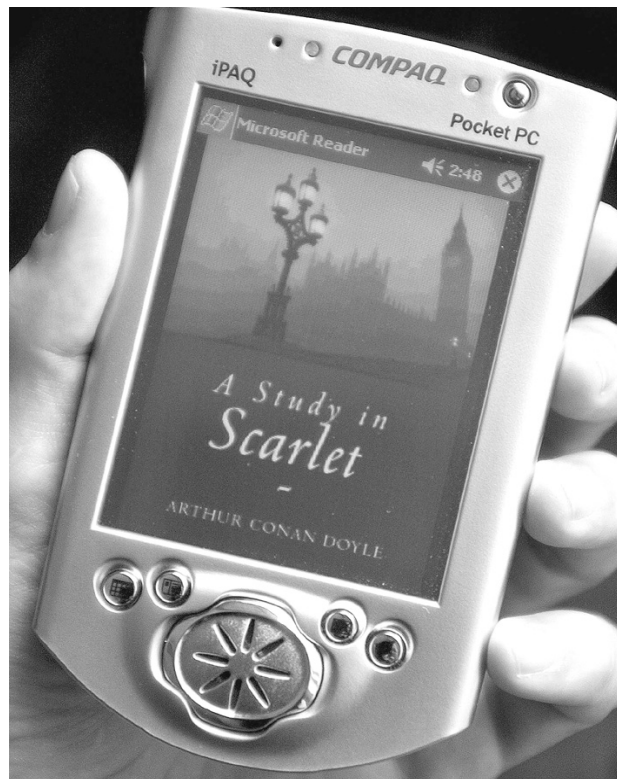
he understood what he was doing and was "clearly mature beyond his 12 years."

Prince Umegbolu was born in the United States but had been sent to live with his grandparents in Abuja, the Nigerian capital.

Walden said her son, the oldest of five children,

missed his family and home. She said he told her drug dealers had approached him at a school choir performance, complimented him on his singing and asked whether he was American. They had him swallow the condoms and promised him airfare to New York and \$1,900, she said.

Book 'em



Richard Drew/Associated Press

A Compaq iPAQ handheld computer loaded with Microsoft's Reader software, for e-books is shown in New York. The iPAQ, a battery-powered reader that weighs as much as a paperback, can be crammed with two dozen books that you download, read, then delete.

Judge throws out suit by former U.S. hostages

BY PETE YOST

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — In a case pitting the Bush administration against former U.S. hostages, a federal judge on Thursday reluctantly threw out the ex-hostages' lawsuit against Iran.

Federal Judge Emmet Sullivan said they were barred from collecting damages for trauma they suffered two decades ago.

"This court has no choice but to ... dismiss this case," Sullivan said, because the U.S. government agreed in 1980 to bar lawsuits as a condition for the release of the 52 Americans. They spent 444 days in captivity when the Iranian government took over the U.S. embassy in Tehran.

"Were this court empowered to judge by its sense of justice, the heartbreaking accounts of the emotional and physical toll ... would be more than sufficient justification" for granting relief, Sullivan wrote in a 98-page opinion.

The State Department intervened in the case late last year. It argued that American

credibility would suffer abroad if the government failed to honor its international commitments, such as the Algiers Accords between the U.S. and Iran that freed the hostages.

The hostages and their families sought \$33 billion in the lawsuit filed against the Islamic Republic of Iran and its ministry of foreign affairs.

The judge criticized Congress for not acting clearly on behalf of the hostages, an assertion that Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, disputed.

"The Congress twice in the last six months has enacted laws to clarify the right of Iranian hostages to sue and collect damages for the pain and suffering," said Harkin. "This decision will only add to that pain and suffering."

In court, the former hostages testified about beatings, simulated executions at the hands of their captors and imprisonment in cold conditions.

Harkin said he will continue efforts on behalf of the hostages so that they have their day in court and receive restitution.

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NATIONAL

Suspect in anthrax hoax convicted of other charges

BY JOHN NOLAN

Associated Press Writer

CINCINNATI — A man suspected of mailing fake anthrax letters to abortion clinics nationwide was convicted Thursday on separate firearms and car theft charges.

A U.S. District Court jury deliberated just 40 minutes before finding Clayton Lee Waagner of Kennerdell, Pa., guilty of all six charges. He faces 15 years to life in prison and fines of up to \$250,000 on each count. Federal authorities say he could get life without parole because he has been convicted of several other violent crimes.

Waagner, who is not an attorney, defended himself. He said he would appeal, though he admitted in his closing statement that he stole a handgun and wasn't surprised by the verdict.

"I expected it," he said. A sentencing date was not scheduled.

Authorities said they expect Waagner, 45, will remain jailed in Cincinnati, then be taken to Philadelphia for questioning about the anthrax letters.

Waagner told jurors the government prosecuted him to cover up its opposition of what he has called his war on the abortion industry.

Waagner has not been charged with sending at least 550 threatening letters to abortion clinics last fall. But on FBI tapes played at the trial here — at Waagner's request — he said he sent the letters in an attempt to shut down the clinics. He also threatened to kill abortion providers.

Waagner was one of the FBI's most wanted fugitives when he was arrested in suburban Springdale on Dec. 5, about 10 months after he escaped from a jail in Illinois.

The federal government also has charged Waagner with bank robberies in Pennsylvania and West Virginia, a car theft in Mississippi and possession of a pipe bomb in Tennessee.

On Thursday, he was convicted of illegally possessing a handgun and a rifle as a fugitive and as a convicted felon; possessing a stolen handgun; and possessing a stolen car.

Texas executes man convicted of killing woman in 1989

BY MICHAEL GRACZYK

Associated Press Writer

HUNTSVILLE, Texas — A man was executed Thursday for killing a 22-year-old woman in a scheme to steal a gun collection from a Houston-area home nearly 13 years ago.

Gerald Casey, a twice-convicted burglar, did not give a final statement before he was given the lethal injection.

Casey, 47, had hoped to sell the stolen weapons to raise money so he and his girlfriend could go to Florida, according to testimony at his capital murder trial. The girlfriend, Carla Smith, received a 10-year prison sentence for her part in the plot.

"I wanted to see him suffer," the vic-

tim's mother, Linda Howell, said after the execution. "It was very, very extremely disappointing. We watched him close his eyes. ... And that was that. Too easy."

Sonya Howell was shot nine times during the July 10, 1989, robbery at a mobile home in New Caney, northeast of Houston. The victim was a friend of Smith.

Dozens of assault rifles, deer rifles, shotguns and pistols were taken from the doublewide trailer. All belonged to Howell's boyfriend, authorities said.

When arrested for murder, Casey already had been to prison twice for burglary. Smith testified at Casey's 1991 trial in exchange for the 10-year sentence. She was paroled after eight years.

Ohio Archbishop investigated on child abuse allegations

BY JOHN NOLAN

Associated Press Writer

CINCINNATI — In an extraordinary move, the archbishop and the chancellor of the Cincinnati Archdiocese were called Thursday before a grand jury investigating child abuse allegations.

Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk was excused from testifying but may be required to appear later, prosecutors said. Chancellor Christopher Armstrong testified, although neither prosecutors nor the archdiocese would discuss what he said.

Pilarczyk, 67, is the first archbishop nationwide to be subpoenaed to appear before a grand jury, said David Clohessy, national director of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests.

"Unprecedented. Absolutely," agreed Jeff Anderson, an attorney who has been active in lawsuits filed by people alleging priest abuse.

Hamilton County prosecutors are try-

ing to determine whether crimes were committed against children.

The Roman Catholic church has struggled with sexual abuse accusations against priests across the country since January. Dozens of priests have been suspended or forced to resign, and church officials are under fire for allegedly ignoring the abuse and warning signs for years and even decades.

The investigation here began after Pilarczyk said some priests accused of child abuse in the past were still working in the archdiocese after undergoing treatment. He said those priests were in positions where no problems would occur and were being monitored.

County Prosecutor Michael Allen angrily suggested Thursday that the archdiocese is withholding documents he asked for under subpoena last month. The church sought a grand jury subpoena, saying it would keep church records confidential unless there is a criminal indictment.

BUSINESS



Norman named executive vice president at VH1

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A new top executive will try to turn around the fortunes of cable channel VH1, which has been struggling to find viewers.

Christina Norman was named executive vice president and general manager Thursday, moving over from an executive post at more-successful sister channel MTV.

The appointment was announced by Judy McGrath, president of MTV Networks Music Group. Norman will be based in New York and will report to McGrath.

While MTV basks in the glory of the new hit series "The Osbournes," VH1 has been in a slump. It averaged 198,000 viewers for the first three months of the year, down markedly from its 252,000 average a year earlier, according to Nielsen Media Research.

VH1's big shows, such as "Behind the Music," have been on for several years and have lost their freshness. In a statement, McGrath said she will work closely with Norman on developing VH1's programming strategy.

Last month, longtime VH1 chief executive John Sykes departed to take over Viacom's radio subsidiary and McGrath was put in charge of VH1. Norman was previously senior vice president of marketing and on-air promotion at MTV.

Stocks decline on Nokia's earnings, outlook for AMD

BY AMY BALDWIN

AP Business Writer

NEW YORK — Frustrated by a still elusive business recovery, investors sold stocks lower Thursday when Nokia reported a drop in profits and sales and Advanced Micro Devices offered a weak outlook for the second quarter.

"The majority of companies are coming out with shaky news. One day they say they see signs of a turnaround, then they say, 'We were premature.' The turnaround is not coming as quickly as people thought," said Al Mirman, strategist at V Finance in Sarasota, Fla.

After the market closed Thursday, Microsoft became the latest big company to warn of lower profits, giving investors another reason to trade cautiously in the coming weeks. Microsoft also reported fiscal third-quarter earnings that missed analysts' expectations by 2 cents a share.

The Dow Jones industrial average closed down 15.50, or 0.2 percent, at 10,205.28.

The broader market also retreated. The Nasdaq composite index fell 8.24, or 0.5 percent, to 1,802.43, and the Standard & Poor's 500 index slipped 1.60, or 0.1 percent, to 1,124.47.

Wall Street rebounded Thursday from sharper losses suffered at midday — the Dow dropping as much as 163.06 — when a small plane hit a skyscraper in Milan, Italy that houses local regional government offices. Later reports indicated the crash was an accident, and that the pilot had sent out a distress call.

But overall the session was lackluster, reflecting the market's disappointment with first-quarter results, which so far have been tepid at best. Aside from a handful of very upbeat earnings announcements, the most positive reports have come from companies that beat previously reduced expectations and are cautiously optimistic about the future.

A lukewarm economic report failed to trigger an upturn. The Conference Board said its Index of Leading Economic Indicators — a key gauge of the direction of the U.S. economy — inched up 0.1 percent last month after holding steady in February.

"The economy is not deteriorating, but at the same time, we are not getting the

momentum people had hoped for," Mirman said.

Among the losers, cell phone maker Nokia fell \$2.53, or 12.3 percent, to \$18.10 after reporting first-quarter profits fell 8.5 percent and sales declined 12 percent. Nokia also reduced its sales outlook for the remainder of the year.

Chip maker AMD recorded a smaller-than-expected loss for the first quarter, but fell \$2.22, or 15 percent, to \$12.60 after saying it still faces tough business conditions. Analysts also don't expect AMD to be profitable until the third quarter.

Microsoft, a Dow stock, declined 26 cents to \$56.37. After its profit warning, the software maker tumbled \$1.48 in extended-hours trading.

The market shouldn't be surprised to see the tech and telecom sectors stumble, analysts said. After all, these areas are still suffering weak demand and inventory gluts. Because tech and telecom firms mostly sell to other businesses, they also don't benefit as much from consumer spending, which remains relatively strong.

"We have been down this road so many times before. ... I am skeptical. They all have very substantial areas of oversupply," said Richard A. Dickson, technical analyst for Hilliard Lyons.

There were also earnings-related winners Thursday. Dow industrial American Express rose \$1.24 to \$42.39 after reporting Thursday its profits beat projections by 3 cents a share.

And, McDonald's, also a Dow stock, climbed \$1.45 to \$28.61 after beating earnings expectations by 2 cents a share and saying it will surpass Wall Street's forecast for 2002.

Declining issues were nearly even with advancers on the New York Stock Exchange. Consolidated volume totaled 1.65 billion shares, below Wednesday's 1.67 billion.

The Russell 2000 index, which tracks the performance of smaller company stocks, slipped 0.20, or 0.04 percent, to 518.57.

Overseas, Japan's Nikkei stock average finished Thursday up 0.3 percent. In Europe, France's CAC-40 slipped 0.2 percent, Britain's FT-SE 100 declined 0.7 percent, Germany's DAX index fell 1.1 percent.

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BUSINESS

State governments receive \$15M from Toshiba lawsuit

By The Associated Press

SACRAMENTO — California governments will split nearly \$15 million from the settlement of a lawsuit that accused Toshiba Corp. of selling defective computers, Attorney General Bill Lockyer said Thursday.

In the suit, the state claimed Toshiba sold hundreds of local governments, the state and schools laptop computers it knew were defective.

Checks are being sent to all 58 California counties, 466 cities, 1,022 special districts, 67 community colleges and the University of California. More than a thousand school districts will get their share at month's end.

Payments average \$4,670, though the state received \$2.6 million, the University of California \$787,660 and Los Angeles County \$760,568.

Half the \$30 million settlement approved in San Francisco Superior Court is going to the governments. The other half will go to the whistle blower who told authorities about the defective computers, lawyers, administrative costs and for future prosecutions.

Lawmakers review contract that could cost millions

BY JENNIFER COLEMAN
Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — The chair of a legislative audit committee called on Attorney General Bill Lockyer Thursday to look into the validity of a state contract that could cost taxpayers millions more than if the state hadn't signed the deal.

A report this week by the Bureau of State Audits found that three state departments improperly relied on a vendor's presentation that the \$95 million software contract with Oracle Corp. would save the state \$111 million.

The contract may cost the state \$6 million to \$41 million more than if there had been no contract at all, State Auditor Elaine Howle told members of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee Thursday.

Assemblyman Dean Florez, D-Shafter, the committee's chairman, called the report "troubling" as he asked for Lockyer's review.

The contract was approved by the departments of Information Technology, General Services and Finance that Howle said relied on a vendor's savings projections instead of doing their own calculations. Each department blamed the others Thursday for the faulty review.

Logicon Inc., which made the cost-savings estimates, stood to make \$28.5 million from the abnormally lengthy six-year deal, she said.

DGC director Barry Keene said he wasn't aware of that arrangement, and thought DOIT had vetted the savings projections.

DOIT Director Elias Cortez said he thought Keene's office or the finance department would do an independent analysis of the figures.

Under the contract, Oracle would license database software for up to 270,000 state workers, despite a survey by DOIT that found very few state workers would need or want Oracle products.

Keene said he hadn't heard of the survey until after the contract was signed.

Cortez said he was "shocked that they hadn't seen it."

Even if it wasn't included with the Oracle contract, DGS was one of the 122 state departments that received the survey, he said.

Assemblyman Bill Leonard, R-Rancho Cucamonga, said the interagency finger-pointing had to stop.

"Someone has to step up and take responsibility," he said. "But other than a

few cover-your-rear e-mails, I haven't seen any state employee step up."

Finance Director Tim Gage, whose staff raised concerns with the savings projections and the contract's lack of an escape clause, said he recommended delaying the contract by a year.

Despite that suggestion, the three departments — DOIT, DGS and finance — approved the contract with the Redwood Shores-based Oracle in May.

"Someone has to step up and take responsibility."

— **BILL LEONARD**
Assemblyman

But 10 months later, no state departments had the software, in part because DGS had not issued instructions on how to get it, Howle's audit found. Still, the state will have paid \$17 million in contract costs and interest fees by June, and another \$14 million payment is due in September, she said.

All three departments now agree with the audit's conclusions, though they say they've taken steps to improve both the contract and the contracting process.

But critics, including Sen. Debra Bowen, D-Marina del Rey, say the audit is a good argument for DOIT to be dismantled.

"DOIT's answer is that ensuring the deal was accurate was somebody else's job because it didn't have the expertise to make sure the state wasn't getting taken for a ride," she said. "Doing that job is the whole reason DIOT was created."

DOIT was created in 1995 to coordinate the state's technology purchases. It will close July 1 unless lawmakers act. Gov. Gray Davis is backing legislation by Assemblyman Manny Diaz, D-San Jose, that extends its life through next year but lets lawmakers terminate projects with substantial cost overruns.

The department has 76 employees and an \$11 million budget.

Oracle officials did not return a telephone message from The Associated Press. A message left for officials at Herndon, Va.-based Logicon, a subsidiary of Los Angeles-based Northrop Grumman Corp., also was not immediately returned.

INTERNATIONAL



Adventurer who crossed Pacific on log raft dies

BY DOUG MELLGREN
Associated Press Writer

OSLO, Norway — Thor Heyerdahl, the Norwegian adventurer who crossed the Pacific on a balsa log raft and detailed his harrowing 101-day voyage in the book "Kon-Tiki," died Thursday night. He was 87.

Heyerdahl stopped taking food, water or medication in early April after being diagnosed with a terminal brain tumor.

"Norway has lost an original and spectacular researcher, explorer and adventurer," Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik said.

Experts scoffed at Heyerdahl when he set off to cross the Pacific aboard a balsa raft in 1947, saying it would get water logged and sink within days.

After 101 days and 4,900 miles, he proved them wrong by reaching Polynesia from Peru in a bid to prove his theories of human migration.

His later expeditions included voyages aboard the reed rafts Ra, Ra II and Tigris. His wide-ranging archaeological studies were often controversial and challenged accepted views.

Until his illness, Heyerdahl had maintained a daunting pace of research, lectures and public debate over his unconventional theories on human migration. His third wife, Jacqueline, said he made 70 airline trips last year.

Relatives said he died in his sleep at a hospital near at Colla Michari, Italy, where he was spending the Easter holiday when he became ill and hospitalized in late March.

Though he lived and worked abroad for decades, Heyerdahl was a national hero in his homeland, where one newspaper crowned him Norwegian of the Century in a millennium reader poll. He is

survived by his third wife, four of his five children, eight grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

After Heyerdahl's 1947 voyage, conventional anthropologists dismissed the college dropout's theories, saying they were only the work of a gifted amateur. But the adventurer gained worldwide fame with the voyage. His book about that trip sold tens of millions of copies and his 1951 movie about the Kon-Tiki voyage won an Academy Award for best documentary.

He followed that trip with expeditions on reed rafts seeking to show that ancient people could have sailed from the Old World to the New.

His later studies focused on ancient step pyramids — including those in Peru and on the island of Tenerife off Africa — which he believed could be evidence of maritime links between ancient civilizations.

Before Heyerdahl made his voyage on the Kon-Tiki, he had to overcome a major obstacle: He was deathly afraid of water. He had nearly drowned twice as a child in Larvik, Norway, and overcame his fear only at age 22, when he fell into a raging river in Tahiti and swam to safety.

His Kon-Tiki trip was intended to support his theory that the South Sea Islands were settled by explorers from pre-Inca South America. The prevailing theory is that Polynesia was settled from Southeast Asia.

Heyerdahl conceived his theory during a year spent on the Pacific island of Fatu Hiva in the Marquesas group. He noticed that stone figures of the Polynesian chief-god Tiki in the jungle were "remarkably like the monoliths left by extinct civilizations in South America."

His colorfully written book about the voyage and his theories was published in more than 60 countries and sold more than 25 million copies.

British paper apologizes to Gadhafi's son to end libel suit

BY THOMAS WAGNER
Associated Press Writer

LONDON — The son of Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi dropped his libel suit Thursday after a British newspaper apologized for what it said were inaccurate articles nearly seven years ago that called him an "untrustworthy maverick" with his own sinister "henchmen."

Saif Gadhafi, a 29-year-old architect and engineer, accepted the apology by The Sunday Telegraph in the case which had recently gone to trial.

Outside the High Court, a smiling Gadhafi said: "I came here to London to clear my name and correct these false things. I'm very happy now they have corrected the mistake. ... I'm going to call my father, and I think he will be happy."

A suit involved two articles. The first in late 1995 alleged that Gadhafi attempted by subterfuge to arrange a deal with an Egyptian banking syndicate to break U.N. sanctions by obtaining \$8 billion in hard currency. This was described as the first step in an operation to buy huge amounts of counterfeit Iranian currency that would be used to flood the Iranian economy.

The second article came after an attempt by a friend of Gadhafi's to

arrange a meeting with the author of the first article to request a correction.

The newspaper had suggested that "henchmen" of Gadhafi's had contacted the author with a view to luring him to Libya to meet a sinister fate.

Gadhafi's attorney, James Price, said the goal of the libel suit was to obtain a retraction and apology. Price said the newspaper had approached Gadhafi through an intermediary before and during the trial to ask him to consider settling the case.

The Sunday Telegraph accepted that the articles were inaccurate and agreed to apologize to Gadhafi in court and in its next edition, said Price and Geoffrey Robertson, an attorney for the Telegraph Group Ltd.

"The settlement of this action is at the initiation of The Sunday Telegraph, which has agreed to make a substantial contribution to the claimant's costs," Robertson said.

A separate statement by the newspaper's editor, Dominic Lawson, said: "Since publication in 1995, we have made numerous attempts to resolve this complaint. We are delighted that we have at long last reached a settlement which both protects our sources and which does not require us to pay any damages."

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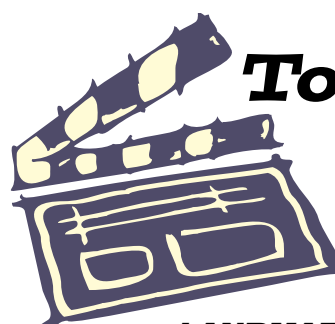
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INTERNATIONAL

U.N. envoy calls Jenin devastation unjustifiable

BY JAMIE TARABAY

Associated Press Writer

JENIN, West Bank — Israel will complete its pullout from the town of Jenin overnight, an army commander said Thursday, after a curfew was lifted and refugee camp residents began searching for loved ones under the rubble. A U.N. envoy said the incursion caused “colossal suffering” and was unjustified.

Brig. Gen. Eyal Schlein, the Israeli army’s Jenin division commander, said his forces had destroyed the “infrastructure — explosive labs, organization heads, and also terrorists.” But he told Israel TV, “The attacks will continue — we haven’t achieved any cease-fire.”

After Israeli forces pulled back from most parts of Jenin on Thursday, Schlein said the withdrawal would be completed overnight, and the military would redeploy on the outskirts.

Near Nablus, the Israeli military said it captured Husam Ataf Ali Badran, a leader of the Hamas militant organization who the army said was responsible for the deaths of more than 100 Israelis in some of the worst suicide bombings in the last year.

He reportedly had a hand in the March 27 Passover suicide bombing in Netanya that triggered the Israeli drive into Palestinian cities and towns. An army statement said his capture “is a significant blow” to Hamas. Witnesses said he was captured and three others were killed in a raid by helicopters firing rockets and machine guns outside the village of Beit Hassan.

Terje Roed-Larsen, the U.N. envoy, said 300 buildings were destroyed and

2,000 people were left homeless in the Jenin refugee camp, scene of the bloodiest fighting of Israel’s three-week campaign to capture or kill armed militants in the West Bank.

“Not any objective can justify such action, with colossal suffering” to civilians, said Larsen, wearing a blue flak jacket and walking over a broad swathe of pulverized concrete where hundreds of people once lived.

Residents found the remains of two bodies and said one of them appeared to be that of Mahmoud Tawalbeh, the regional leader of militant Islamic Jihad. He had admitted sending suicide bombers to Israel, among them his younger brother. On April 11, Israel reported it believed its forces killed Tawalbeh.

So far, 30 bodies have been found in Jenin. The Palestinians accuse Israel of a massacre in the camp, but Israel says fewer than 100 people were killed, most of them militants. Israel lost 23 soldiers in the operation. The Israelis blame the Palestinians for the carnage, saying militants refused warnings to evacuate and then booby-trapped themselves and buildings.

Thirty-five more decomposing bodies were buried in Nablus when Israel lifted a curfew for three hours.

In Washington, President Bush said Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was keeping his promise to withdraw from the West Bank and was on schedule.

“He gave me a timetable and he met the timetable,” Bush said.

Bush dismissed assessments that Secretary of State Colin Powell’s Mideast mission, which ended Wednesday without

a cease-fire, had failed and said the United States would continue to pursue a truce.

Powell’s deputy for the Mideast, William Burns, arrived in Cairo on Thursday to follow up on the weeklong Powell trip, saying the first priority was to complete the Israeli withdrawal.

After that, he said, the United States hoped to arrange security consultations between the Israelis and Palestinians. Officials in Washington said CIA Director George Tenet would be in the region soon, perhaps by next week, to try to set up the Israeli-Palestinian talks.

In Ramallah, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat was visited by Jordanian Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher and got a check-up from his neurologist, Dr. Ashraf al-Kurdi, who said Arafat was in good health.

Several years ago, Arafat developed tremors in his lower lip that doctors called a nervous tic. Media reports have speculated he suffers from Parkinson’s disease, a degenerative neurological disease.

Arafat “is in high spirits, although his compound has been turned into a battlefield,” Muasher said after returning to Amman, the Jordanian capital.

Sharon told Powell Israeli troops would complete their withdrawal from occupied West Bank towns by the end of the week, except for the siege around the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and Arafat’s headquarters in Ramallah, where Israel says wanted men are holed up.

In Bethlehem, a meeting to negotiate a peaceful evacuation of the 250 people in the church, including many gunmen and about 50 clergymen, was canceled, said

Mayor Hanna Nasser.

Powell described the siege of the church and the isolation of Arafat in Ramallah as key obstacles to a cease-fire agreement.

During a visit to a hospital on Thursday, Sharon repeated Israel’s readiness to take part in a regional peace conference he first proposed during the Powell visit.

“When we will reach a cease-fire we, of course, will be happy to enter a peace process with a coalition, a coalition of peace with Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and perhaps Morocco and the Palestinians. That’s not the situation today, but I hope we will reach this situation,” Sharon said.

He also said, “Israel cannot accept international forces here,” although he previously suggested he would allow U.S. observers to be stationed in the area. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has called for an armed international peacekeeping force to separate the two sides.

In Jenin, Larsen, the U.N. envoy, urged Israel to withdraw and immediately allow professional teams to search for survivors.

“Corpses were being dug up just below the surface and the stench is terrible,” the Norwegian said. “This is horrifying beyond belief. Just seeing this area, it looks like there’s been an earthquake here.”

Danny Ayalon, Sharon’s chief foreign policy adviser, denied Israel had blocked relief efforts.

“We have tried all along to work with the Palestinians to bury the dead, but the Palestinians refused,” Ayalon said.

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INTERNATIONAL



Small plane slams into Milan building, killing 5

BY ANDREW DAMPF
Associated Press Writer

MILAN, Italy — A small plane, in flames and reporting mechanical problems, smashed into the tallest skyscraper in Italy's financial capital Thursday, killing at least three people and injuring 60. The crash initially raised fears of a Sept. 11-type terror attack, but the Italian government said it was probably an accident.

The aircraft punched through the 25th floor of the slim Pirelli building, gutting two floors and starting a fire that sent smoke pouring out into the clear blue sky over downtown Milan. Emergency workers helped bloodied men in business suits while firefighters worked to put out the blaze.

"I heard something like the engine of a plane dying out,



Fabio Polimeni/Associated Press

Smoke rises from the Pirelli building in Milan, Italy on Thursday. Officials said a small plane with only the pilot on board crashed Thursday into a 30-story landmark skyscraper in downtown Milan that houses the regional government offices. The weather was clear at the time.

and then I heard a terrible explosion," said Raffaele Taccogna, who was tending bar at the nearby Atlantic Hotel. "I certainly thought of the September attacks in the United States," he said. "It really looked like the same thing."

The pilot — who was on a 20-minute flight from Locarno, Switzerland, to Milan — had started landing procedures at Milan's Linate airport when air traffic controllers alerted him that he wasn't lined up with the runway, the Italian air traffic controller's association said late Thursday.

The pilot reported "a little problem with the landing gear," and the control tower instructed him to move to the west of the airport until it was fixed, a statement from the association said, adding that the pilot didn't issue a distress signal as officials had previously reported. The control tower contacted the pilot again after seeing he was drifting to the north, in the wrong direction.

The pilot said he was fixing the problem, and the tower instructed him to move back into position to land. But the pilot again didn't get into the right position, it said. The control tower then lost contact.

One witness, Fabio Sunik, said the plane was on fire before it crashed. The plane did not try to change course, "but just went straight in," said Sunik, a sports journalist. "Then I saw rubble falling from the building."

Some 1,300 people work in the building, which houses local government offices, but it was not known how many were still there when the crash took place — not long after working hours ended.

Milan's main train station, about 200 yards away from the skyscraper, was evacuated for security reasons, and no trains were running from there. After-hours trading was suspended on the Milan stock market, which was already closed for the day.

The U.S. Consulate in Milan, about a half-mile) from the scene, evacuated the few staffers still in the office as a safety precaution, said Tom Skipper, consulate spokesman.

President Bush was quickly notified of the collision, press secretary Ari Fleischer said. The FBI was assisting in the investigation.

In Washington, a senior Bush administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Italian officials had told the United States that a mechanical problem not related to terrorism caused the crash.

Interior Minister Claudio Scajola told reporters in Rome that "initial reports point to an accident."

"We believe it isn't a terrorist attack," said police Sgt. Vincenzo Curto, reached at Carabinieri headquarters.

There was a discrepancy over the death toll. Earlier, a civil defense official, Carlo Leo, reported five dead: the pilot, two office workers and two passers-by. However, the vice president of the Lombardy region, Vivian Beccalossi, reported only three dead later in the day: the pilot, a cleaning woman and a government lawyer. The

Milan prefect's office, which had previously reported four dead, also revised the toll to three dead.

Rescue workers found a survivor, three hours after the crash, on the 25th floor, where one of the dead was found.

The pilot, believed to be the only one in the plane, was identified by police as Luigi Fasulo, a resident of Pregassona, Switzerland who was thought to be in his 60s.

Swiss television news reported that the pilot had dual Swiss-Italian nationality. He often flew the Locarno-Milan route to keep his flying license up to date, it said.

Interviewed by Swiss television, Sandro Balestra, director of Locarno airfield, said the pilot was known in the area for at least 30 years. The plane belonged to him. At the time of the takeoff, the control tower was closed but a radio registration system recorded the takeoff. The crash was recorded by Milan's Linate control tower.

The plane was a Rockwell Commander, said Patrick Herr of the Swiss air traffic control office SKYGUIDE. Swiss television identified the model as a Commander 112TC, a twin-engine craft with a 35-foot wingspan not produced since 1979.

A woman who worked on the eighth floor said she saw 10 people who were bleeding. Emergency workers in bright orange uniforms helped a man walk from the scene, his shirt splattered with blood and his hand covering a gash on his head.

An unspecified number of people were rescued from elevators in the building, the Italian news service ANSA said. Some 20 people were taken to Fatebene Fratelli hospital, officials there said. Among them was a woman with serious burns.

The collision damaged a building seen as the symbol of Milan, the heart of Italy's financial and industrial world. Built in the 1950s, the 415-foot-high building once housed the headquarters of the tire giant Pirelli.

Smoke continued to pour out of the building for three hours after the crash, though firefighters quickly controlled the blaze. A large section of an entire floor lost its walls. Smoke and liquid poured from the gash in one side of the building.

Luccheta Antonio, 52, a barber down the block, said: "It was shocking. The windows shook and the mirrors fell to the floor."

Police cordoned off the area as people gawked at the skyscraper.

Senate President Marcello Pera said initially that it appeared the crash was "most probably" a terrorist attack. But later, Pera's spokesman said the Interior Minister had advised that apparently was not the case.

The State Department had warned of possible terrorist attacks in Milan and three other Italian cities over the Easter weekend. But U.S. authorities had no recent intelligence suggesting any kind of terrorist attack in Milan.

Venezuela president opens debate to bring nation together

BY JOHN RICE
Associated Press Writer

CARACAS, Venezuela — A week after protests set off bloodshed and toppled governments, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez opened "a great national debate" Thursday to bring this bitterly divided nation together.

Gathering governors and mayors, Chavez called for a discussion of the country's future "with great respect for our differences, which are valid and, furthermore, necessary."

After demonstrations that toppled and restored Chavez while killing at least 49 people, Chavez called on Venezuelans "to finally, by God, leave behind bloodshed."

But he leavened his plea with digs at his foes. Chavez called the turmoil that toppled him a "planned ambush."

"There will be no taboo subjects, nor should there be," Chavez said. But he said Venezuelans must accept the 1999 constitution he promoted and Venezuelans

approved in a referendum.

Economist Pedro Carmona, the man who dissolved Venezuela's Congress and other democratic institutions during his one-day rule, insisted he acted only to fill the vacuum of power.

In newspaper interviews published Thursday, Carmona dismissed comparisons to Augusto Pinochet's 1973 CIA-backed coup in Chile. But he admitted he made errors, including not receiving a confirmed resignation letter from Chavez before he swore himself in as president on Saturday.

In Washington, President Bush called on Chavez to respect democratic values such as freedom of the press. "If there are lessons to be learned, it's important that he learn them," Bush said.

Foreign ministers of the Organization of American States were to hear a report from the secretary-general, Cesar Gaviria, on his fact-finding mission in Venezuela. Gaviria castigated Venezuelans for refusing dialogue.

The National Assembly debated who

opened fire on the April 11 demonstration by hundreds of thousands of protesters. The slayings prompted Venezuela's leading generals to oust Chavez.

Both sides displayed videotapes showing their rivals firing guns during the protest and their comrades falling dead.

At least 16 people died that day. Dozens more died Saturday and Sunday during riots by loyalists preceding Chavez's return to power, and in widespread looting.

Chavez insists he never resigned April 12, as military commanders claimed.

A dissident general, Nestor Gonzalez, told local press that generals balked at Chavez's order to call out troops and said the ouster was "a humanitarian act meant to avoid having the army attack the people and produce a massacre."

He said the high command asked Chavez to resign and the president agreed "if he was allowed to go to Cuba."

The generals grew tired of arguing whether he should go or be held in

Venezuela, so they arrested him "to fill the vacuum of power that existed," Gonzalez said.

Several top officers have been arrested. Most are under house arrest. But Chavez reconfirmed Gen. Lucas Rincon, the top-ranking soldier who announced Chavez had resigned.

At least 80 people are accused of participating in the coup. Attorney Hidalgo Valero, defending five officers, said that if his clients go to trial, "they could add more than 3,000 officers to the trial, among them Lucas Rincon."

Carmona said he agreed to become de facto leader only after repeated calls from military commanders, whom he refused to identify.

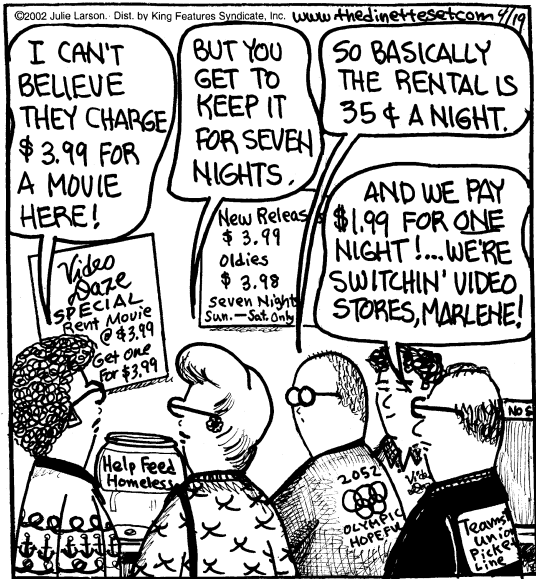
Carmona, who is under house arrest, said he dissolved the National Assembly, constitution, courts and other public offices to facilitate a rapid transition to new elections.

"I want to emphasize that I have a proven commitment to democracy," he said.



COMICS

The Dinette Set by Julie Larson



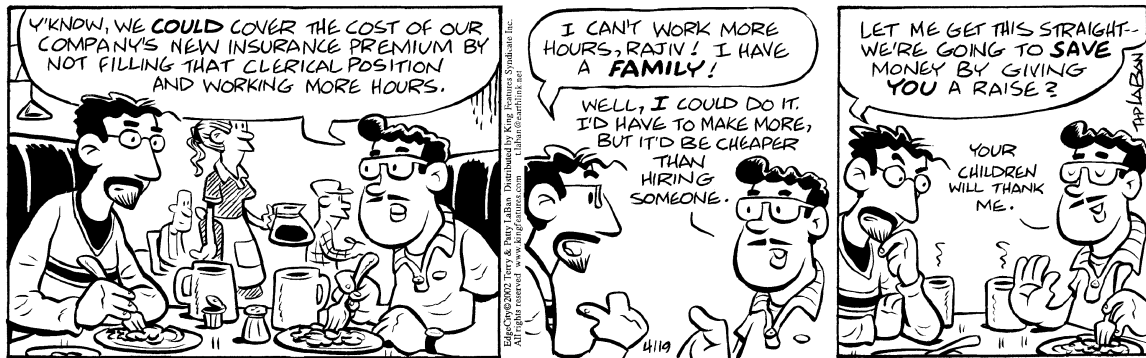
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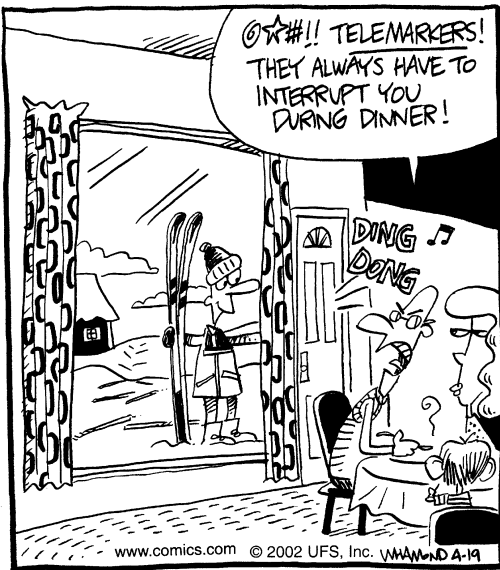
"No, I will not be OK. Give up your career, and stay with me. I may need some soup later."



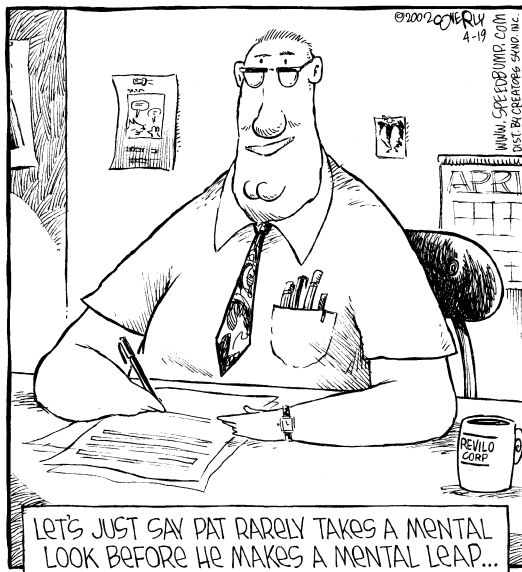
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CROSSWORD By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Like top
he-men
6 Pick-up game
11 Pale
12 "Gesundheit" preceder
13 Fen
14 Fab drummer
15 That woman
16 Before today
18 Blushing
19 Old cloth measure
20 Bad review
21 Composer Francis
22 Fast pitch
24 Zephyr
25 Case for an otologist
27 Cosby series
29 Peanut
32 Soccer's Hamm
33 "Stand" band
34 Doc's bloc
35 For every
36 Exploit
37 Brink
38 TV's Adam
40 Warbles

- DOWN**
- 42 Wave
43 "If — a Rich Man"
44 Baked treats
45 Marginalia

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Yesterday's answer

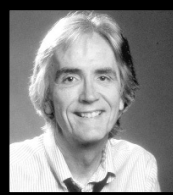
- 8 Sax great
9 "M*A*S*H" extra
10 Vile
17 Car holders
23 Calendar box
24 Reporter's question
26 Enters
27 Effect
28 Rugged range
30 Political exile
31 Karnak leader
33 Littlest of litters
39 Believer
41 — Jima

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4-19

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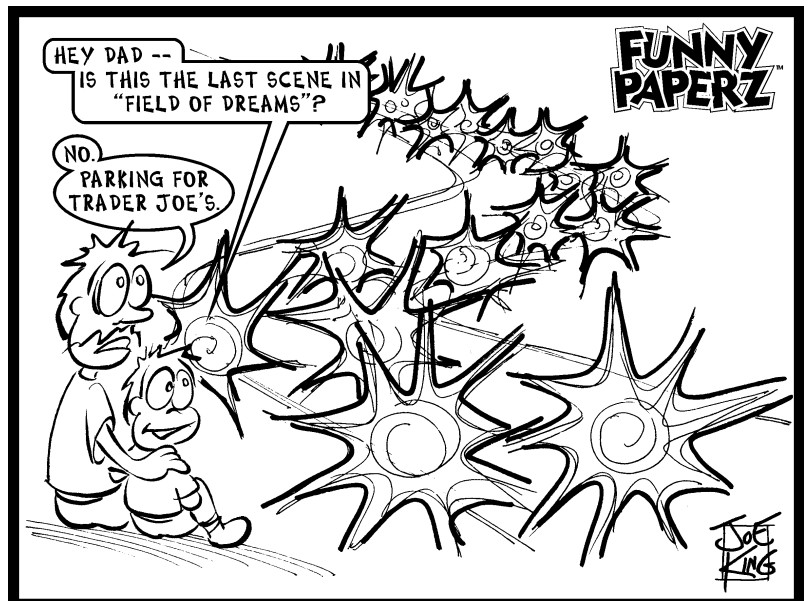


NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

Re-insurance company may save \$3.5 billion from Sept. 11 tragedy

- The Swiss Re re-insurance company told financial analysts in February that it would likely post its first yearly loss since 1866 unless a court agrees with it that the two Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center (18 minutes apart) were just one big event, thus saving it at least \$3.5 billion.
- The Supreme Court of Canada ruled in March that two widows can collect on their husbands' life insurance policies even though the men died while committing crimes (one while attempting murder; the other when cocaine-filled balloons burst in his stomach).



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