

Today	Tuesday	Wednesday
		
High: 77 Low: 48 Precip: 0%	High: 70 Low: 54 Precip: 30%	High: 70 Low: 48 Precip: 30%

IN BRIEF

Political violence claims 957 lives in Afghanistan

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — The killing in Afghanistan spirals onward, undermining U.S. claims of success in pacifying the country with less than a week to go before an historic experiment with democracy — direct presidential elections.

The deaths of three Afghan soldiers and two militants over the weekend brought the number of people reported killed in political violence this year to at least 957, according to an Associated Press review. The toll includes about 30 American soldiers.

With Afghanistan three years removed from Taliban rule, President Bush has acclaimed the Oct. 9 presidential vote a beacon of hope for the Islamic world, and a prelude to even more tricky balloting slated for January in violence-plagued Iraq.

Samarra victory praised by U.S. commanders

SAMARRA, Iraq — Bloodied by weeks of suicide bombings and assassinations, Iraqi security forces emerged Sunday to patrol Samarra after a morale-boosting victory in this Sunni Triangle city, and U.S. commanders praised their performance. American and Iraqi commanders have declared the operation in Samarra, 60 miles northwest of Baghdad, a successful first step in a major push to wrest key areas of Iraq from insurgents before January elections.

Sharon vows to escalate Israeli offensive in Gaza

JERUSALEM — Prime Minister Ariel Sharon pledged Sunday to escalate a broad Israeli offensive in northern Gaza, saying troops will remain until Palestinian rocket attacks are halted. Israeli officials said the offensive — in which 58 Palestinians and three Israelis have been killed — will help clear the way for an Israeli

withdrawal. Israel poured 2,000 troops into northern Gaza after a Palestinian rocket attack on Wednesday killed two preschoolers in the Israeli town of Sderot.

Mount St. Helens sees second long tremor

MOUNT ST. HELENS NATIONAL MONUMENT, Wash. — As scientists warned that an eruption of Mount St. Helens appeared imminent Sunday, eager tourists camped out along park roads, hoping to catch a glimpse of the seething volcano without being overcome by ash and smoke. A second long tremor early Sunday and an increase in volcanic gases strongly suggest magma is moving inside, researchers from the U.S. Geological Survey said. The mountain's alert was raised to Level 3, the highest possible, after a volcanic tremor was detected Saturday for the first time since before the mountain's 1980 eruption.

Iranian transportation minister impeached

TEHRAN, Iran — In the latest blow to the administration of reformist President Mohammad Khatami, Iran's conservative-dominated parliament impeached the transportation minister on Sunday, accusing him of financial mismanagement and a shady aviation deal.

After several hours of debate, 188 legislators voted to strip Ahmad Khorram of his Cabinet post. Fifty-eight voted in his favor and nine abstained. Conservative lawmakers raised loud cheers of "Allahu akbar," or "God is great."

A senior conservative lawmaker, former Deputy Foreign Minister Alaeddin Boroujerdi, said the vote was parliament's "show of strength."

The conservatives accused Khorram of financial mismanagement and of jeopardizing Iran's security by signing a deal with TAV, a Turkish-Austrian aviation consortium, to operate at the new Imam Khomeini International Airport on the outskirts of Tehran.

Hard-liners in parliament believe the contract compromised Iran's security and aviation systems. Iranian armed forces, controlled by hard-liners, accused TAV of having links with Israel, Iran's arch foe.

— The Associated Press

ONLINE: BEFORE IT'S GONE

About 60 people celebrated a \$1.5-million donation for an expansion of the University Theatre's performance facilities. The Arena Theatre, a small theater located in Villard Hall, will be replaced by a larger performance area. One of the last opportunities to catch a show there is the Oct. 27 opening of "Vanities" by Jack Heifner. Visit www.dailymerald.com for the complete story on the University Theatre's upgrades and other donations to the department.

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