

Today	Thursday	Friday
High: 56 Low: 43 Precip: 30%	High: 56 Low: 39 Precip: 10%	High: 57 Low: 43 Precip: 20%

IN BRIEF

Ashcroft, Evans resign from Bush cabinet

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Attorney General John Ashcroft, a favorite of conservative, and Commerce Secretary Don Evans, one of President Bush's closest friends, resigned Tuesday, the first members of the Cabinet to leave as Bush heads from re-election into his second term. Both Ashcroft and Evans have served in Bush's Cabinet from the start of the administration.

Arafat clings to life as condition worsens

PARIS — A deeply comatose Yasser Arafat clung to life Tuesday after suffering another downturn, his major organs still functioning but his survival dependent "on the will of God," a Palestinian foreign minister said. Palestinian leaders made preparations for Arafat's eventual death. They said they would bury Arafat in his sandbagged headquarters in the West Bank and turn the site into a shrine.

Thai militants behead Buddhist laborer

BANGKOK, Thailand — Suspected Islamic militants beheaded a Buddhist laborer in Thailand's tumultuous south, police said Tuesday, the second such killing in retaliation for the deaths of 85 Muslims at the hands of security forces last month.

The attackers left notes with the 60-year-old man's body threatening further revenge attacks. Officials identified the victim only as Kaew.

An analyst warned that the gruesome nature of the killing signaled that violence in the region had reached a new level of brutality.

At least 85 Muslim protesters died on Oct. 25 when security forces cracked down on a violent demonstration outside a police station in Narathiwat's Tak Bai district. Most of the victims suffocated or were crushed after they were arrested and crammed into army trucks.

The crackdown and deaths triggered a new round of violence in the Muslim-majority southern provinces, where a deadly separatist insurgency has simmered for years.

Thirty-six people, including 25 Buddhists, have been killed in bombings and shootings since the Tak Bai incident. More than 500 people have been killed this year.

Russian protesters call for resignation of official

ROSTOV-ON-DON, Russia — Hundreds of protesters ransacked and occupied the regional administration building in a southern Russian province Tuesday, demanding the resignation of the region's president, whose former son-in-law has been linked to a multiple slaying.

Hundreds of armed riot police were standing guard outside the office of regional President Mustafa Batdjev, a duty officer for the Karachayev-Cherkessiya regional interior ministry said.

The protesters got into the building by battering down the doors with metal barriers. Television footage showed men and women inside breaking windows, pulling down curtains and window frames and throwing papers and potted plants out the windows as uniformed police fled.

Thirty people were injured in the melee, including six law-enforcement officers who were hospitalized, one in serious condition, said the duty officer, who declined to give his name. One woman was seen wielding a police truncheon against an interior ministry soldier.

Nearly 1,000 people, most elderly women, were occupying the building late Tuesday, the duty officer said.

Airlines agree to test drinking water

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The government and a dozen airlines struck a deal Tuesday requiring sanitation improvements and increased testing of drinking water aboard aircraft after officials found evidence of harmful bacteria in the water of one in every eight planes tested. At the same time, the Environmental Protection Agency announced it would perform random water quality tests on 169 domestic and international passenger aircraft at 14 airports throughout the United States and publish the results by the end of the year.

Judge removes juror in Scott Peterson case

REDWOOD CITY, Calif. — A juror in the Scott Peterson murder trial who apparently did her own research on the case was removed and replaced with an alternate Tuesday, and the judge ordered the panel to start over with its deliberations.

"We're going to send you back. Start all over again and keep in touch," Judge Alfred A. Delucchi told the panel on the fifth day of deliberations.

— The Associated Press

Fallujah offensive moves to day two; 10 U.S. troops die

Insurgents move to the south as military officials report U.S. forces control about a third of the city

BY JIM KRANE
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEAR FALLUJAH, Iraq — U.S. troops powered their way into the center of the insurgent stronghold of Fallujah on Tuesday, overwhelming small bands of guerrillas with massive force, searching homes along the city's deserted, narrow passageways and using loudspeakers to try to goad militants onto the streets.

As of Tuesday night, the fighting had killed 10 U.S. troops and two members of the Iraqi security force, the U.S. military announced. The toll already equaled the 10 American military deaths when Marines besieged the city for three weeks in April.

As the offensive moved into a second full day, up to eight attack aircraft — including jets and helicopter gunships — blasted guerrilla strongholds and raked the streets with rocket, cannon and machine-gun fire ahead of U.S. and Iraqi infantry who were advancing only one or two blocks behind the curtain of fire.

Small groups of guerrillas, armed with rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, mortars and machine guns, engaged U.S. troops, then fell back. U.S. troops inspected houses along Fallujah's streets and ran across adjoining alleyways, mindful of snipers.

A psychological operations unit broadcast announcements in Arabic meant to draw out gunmen. An Iraqi translator from the group said through a loudspeaker: "Brave terrorists, I am waiting here for the brave terrorists. Come and kill us. Plant small bombs on roadsides. Attention, attention, terrorists of Fallujah."

Faced with overwhelming force, resistance in Fallujah did not appear as fierce as expected, though the top U.S. commander in Iraq said he still expected "several more days of tough urban fighting" as insurgents fell back toward the southern end of the city, perhaps for a last stand.

Some U.S. military officers estimated they controlled about a third of the city. Commanders said they

had not fully secured the northern half of Fallujah but were well on their way as American and Iraqi troops searched for insurgents.

The move against Fallujah prompted influential Sunni Muslim clerics to call for a boycott of national elections set for January. A widespread boycott among Sunnis could wreck the legitimacy of the elections, seen as vital in Iraq's move to democracy. U.S. commanders have said the Fallujah invasion is the centerpiece of an attempt to secure insurgent-held areas so voting can be held.

Prime Minister Ayad Allawi declared a nighttime curfew in Baghdad and its surroundings — the first in the capital for a year — to prevent insurgents from opening up a "second front" to try to draw American forces away from Fallujah. Clashes erupted in the northern city of Mosul and near the Sunni bastion of Ramadi, explosions were reported in at least two cities, and masked militants brandished weapons and warned merchants to close their shops.

In Fallujah, U.S. troops were advancing more rapidly than in April, when insurgents fought a force of fewer than 2,000 Marines to a standstill in a three-week siege. It ended with the Americans handing over the city to a local force, which lost control to Islamic militants.

This time, the U.S. military has sent up to 15,000 U.S. and Iraqi troops into the battle, backed by tanks, artillery and attack aircraft. More than 24 hours after launching the main attack, U.S. soldiers and Marines had punched through insurgent strongholds in the north and east of Fallujah and reached the major east-west highway that bisects the city.

Lt. Gen. Thomas Metz, the senior American commander for the Fallujah operation, said although capturing or killing the senior insurgent leadership is a goal of the operation, the most wanted man in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, had escaped Fallujah.

It was unclear how many insurgents stayed in the city for the fight, given months of warnings by U.S. officials and Iraqis that a confrontation was in the offing.

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