

Today	Friday	Saturday
		
High: 46 Low: 33 Precip: 0%	High: 46 Low: 35 Precip: 0%	High: 46 Low: 35 Precip: 60%

IN BRIEF

As election nears, U.S. force in Iraq rises

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The United States is expanding its military force in Iraq to the highest level of the war even higher than during the initial invasion in March 2003 — in order to bolster security in advance of next month's national elections.

The 12,000-troop increase will last only until March.

Brig. Gen. David Rodriguez, deputy operations director of the Joint Staff, said Wednesday that the American force will expand from the current level of 138,000 troops to about 150,000 by January.

The previous high for the U.S. force in Iraq was 148,000 on May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations were over. The initial invasion force included thousands of sailors in the Persian Gulf and other waters, plus tens of thousands of troops in Kuwait and other surrounding countries.

Bush asks Canada for support in Iraq, Mideast

HALIFAX, Nova Scotia — President Bush asked Canadians on Wednesday to move beyond their opposition to the Iraq war and get behind his vision of democracies blooming from Baghdad to the West Bank.

"Sometimes even the closest of friends disagree, and two years ago we disagreed about the course of action in Iraq," Bush said, standing at the side of Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin.

But, Bush said, "there is no disagreement at all with what has to be done in going forward. We must help the Iraqi people secure their country and build a free and democratic society."

On a bridge-building trip to America's northern neighbor, Bush conceded that the United States can be a difficult "elephant" to live next to but delivered a forceful defense of his approach to combating terrorism.

Ukraine's opposition scores big victory

KIEV, Ukraine — Ukraine's opposition scored key victories Wednesday in its bid to scrap a disputed presidential election as parliament voted no confidence in the government and European-brokered talks provided momentum toward a new ballot.

Opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko urged throngs of supporters to stay on the streets until plans for what he demanded — a re-run of the Nov. 21 runoff with Kremlin-backed Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich — are worked out, which he said could be as early as Dec. 19.

— The Associated Press

AIDS prevention does not match previous pledge

The annual rate of HIV infections remains unchanged despite the government's vow to cut the number in half

BY DANIEL YEE
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA — Nearly a million Americans now have the AIDS virus, and the nation's ability to keep others from becoming infected still lags, despite a government pledge four years ago to "break the back" of the AIDS epidemic by 2005.

The campaign, launched by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in February 2001, intended to cut in half the estimated 40,000 new HIV infections that have occurred every year since the 1990s.

However, the rate of new cases remains about the same, according to CDC data released Wednesday as part of the federal health agency's commemoration of World AIDS Day.

"We have a ways to go before we reach the mark of reducing new infections by half in the United States," said Dr. Ronald Valdiserri, the director of the CDC HIV and AIDS prevention program. He called the country's HIV infection rate "relatively stable."

"Clearly we want to continue, and are continuing, to fund programs to reach out to people who are high-risk and are not infected," he added.

In 2001, the CDC's campaign focused on outwardly healthy people who did not realize they had HIV — about one-fourth of those infected. Officials said targeting them was key, because if they knew they were infected, they would be more likely to take steps not to spread the virus.

Such an effort "could possibly break the back of the epidemic in the United States," the CDC's Dr. Robert Janssen said in 2001.

But the agency found that just targeting people who didn't know they had the AIDS virus was not enough. So last year, the CDC shifted gears, focusing on counseling those who knew they had HIV in an attempt to prevent them from spreading the virus.

Yet some advocacy groups say that particular effort fails to focus on drug users or sexually active young men, which advocacy groups say is key in preventing new infections.

"It just doesn't seem like much is really happening," said Terje Anderson, executive director of the Washington-based National Association of People Living with AIDS.

"There just is a lack of imagination or spark in terms of the kinds of programs they support. I think they are politically afraid."

However, one AIDS expert said that it is difficult for health officials to measure exactly how many new HIV infections there are each year.

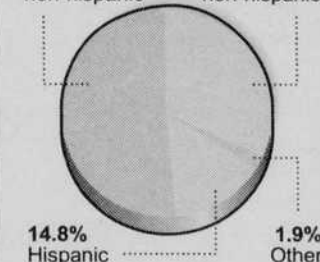
"Forty-thousand is an estimate that is averaged over time. The changes can't be tracked easily from year to year," said Dr. James Curran, dean of Emory University's Rollins

New HIV/AIDS cases

From 2000 to 2003, new cases of HIV/AIDS were diagnosed in 125,800 persons who resided in the 32 states surveyed.*

HIV by race, ethnicity

51% Black, non-hispanic 32% White, non-hispanic



How disease was transmitted

Men who have sex with men, MSM 44.1%

Heterosexual contact with known infected person 34.3

Injection drug use, IDU 16

MSM and IDU 4.1

Other 1.6

* Ala., Alaska, Ariz., Ark., Colo., Fla., Idaho, Ind., Iowa, Kan., La., Mich., Minn., Miss., Mo., Neb., Nev., N.J., N.M., N.C., N.D., Ohio, Okla., S.C., S.D., Tenn., Texas, Utah, Va., W.Va., Wis., Wyo.

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention AP

School of Public Health and the CDC's former AIDS chief during the 1980s.

Valdiserri said the CDC is working on a way to accurately determine how many people are infected with HIV each year, but the system is still under development. Still, Curran said more attention needs to be paid to AIDS.

"What has concerned many of us in the United States is the lack of attention to the domestic AIDS problem and complacency on behalf of high-risk groups," Curran said, adding that more counseling, testing and education is needed.

The CDC believes up to 950,000 people in the United States are infected with HIV and up to 280,000 of them don't know it, Valdiserri said.

The rate of HIV diagnoses in the United States increased slightly — by 1 percent — between 2000 and 2003, from 19.5 people per 100,000 population to 19.7 per 100,000 in the 32 states surveyed by the CDC.

"The reality is, to cut the number of infections, we need to do more — you can't always do more with less. We desperately need more resources," Anderson said.

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