

Today	Wednesday	Thursday
High: 60 Low: 49 Precip: 80%	High: 60 Low: 46 Precip: 20%	High: 55 Low: 43 Precip: 50%

IN BRIEF

Catholic archbishop seized in Mosul

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Insurgents kidnapped a Catholic archbishop and targeted security forces in a series of brazen assaults Monday that killed more than 20 people. A suicide bomber attacked U.S. Marines in Ramadi, where insurgents also beheaded two Shiite Muslims and left their bodies on a sidewalk.

The top U.S. general in Iraq predicted violence during the Jan. 30 national election, but pledged to do "everything in our power" to ensure the safety of voters. As part of a crackdown on insurgents, U.S. troops arrested more than 100 suspects over the past three days, U.S. officials said.

In Mosul, Archbishop Basile Georges Casmooussa of the Syrian Catholic Church was seized by gunmen, and the Vatican condemned the abduction as a "terrorist act." The 66-year-old churchman was grabbed while walking in front of his church, a priest said on condition of anonymity.

A U.S. spokesman said Marines suffered an undisclosed number of casualties in a suicide car bombing in Ramadi. Later, U.S. command reported two Marines were killed in action in the province that includes Ramadi, but would not say whether they died in the car bombing.

— The Associated Press

State legislature mulls over child protection system

BY BRAD CAIN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SALEM — Spurred on by recent cases involving the death and injury of children in state care, a legislative panel began hearings Monday into a child protection system that one lawmaker said suffers from "an alarming problem."

"We are going to get to the bottom of what these problems are," said Rep. Billy Dalto, R-Salem, who is chairman of the House Health and Human Services Committee.

Meanwhile, the state's top child protection official said the program is struggling to keep up with a rising number of child abuse and neglect cases fueled in large part by Oregon's methamphetamine epidemic.

"The methamphetamine problem alone is driving our system in a way that none of us could have anticipated 10 years ago," said Ramona Foley, assistant director of the Oregon Department of Human Services.

The comments came as Dalto's committee began looking for ways to avoid a repeat of two high-profile cases that have put a spotlight on the department's child protection efforts.

Last month, officials found a 5-year-old girl, Jordan Knapp, in a foster home near Sandy, weighing a mere 28 pounds. The girl's foster parents face charges of

child abuse.

A week later, a 15-month-old boy, Ashton Parris, died of head injuries after the state returned him to his birth mother as part of a state-supervised plan to reunite the family. The death is under investigation.

Those cases brought a call from Gov. Ted Kulongoski to review the state's child protection system.

A state team that looked into the case of the malnourished girl issued a report last week criticizing what it said were poor communications and record-keeping and a lack of coordination among caseworkers.

Some of that same criticism was aired at Monday's committee hearing.

House Speaker Karen Minnis, who attended the meeting, said the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office has told her that the state department at times has been reluctant to share information with local police agencies.

"There is a lot of frustration that law enforcement can't get information" on pending child abuse complaints, the Wood Village Republican said.

The department also drew criticism from one lawmaker who said state caseworkers sometimes remove the child from the home and break up a family without proper justification.

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