

IN BRIEF

**Hurricane Wilma claims three on Mexico's coast**

CANCUN, Mexico — Hurricane Wilma lashed Mexico's Caribbean coastline for a second day Saturday, ripping away storefronts, peeling back roofs and forcing tourists and residents trapped in hotels and shelters to scramble to higher floors. At least three people were killed.

Waves slammed into seaside pools and sent water surging over the narrow strip of sand housing Cancun's luxury hotels and raucous bars, joining the sea with the alligator-infested lagoon. Downtown, winds tore banks open, leaving automatic teller machines partially submerged in water.

Wilma weakened to a Category 2 hurricane by midafternoon as it inched northward, with sustained winds of 100 mph, but it was expected to pick up speed Sunday after moving out over the Gulf of Mexico. It was likely to sideswipe Cuba before hitting Florida, probably Monday.

A hurricane watch was issued Saturday for the entire southern Florida peninsula, with heavy rain from Wilma's outer bands already causing hip-deep flooding in Fort Lauderdale.

**Hurricane watch issued for the majority of Florida**

KEY WEST, Fla. — Heavy rain from Hurricane Wilma's outer bands battered parts of Florida on Saturday as residents streamed out of the Keys under a mandatory evacuation order and forecasters announced a hurricane watch for the state's entire southern peninsula.

At the same time, a record 22nd tropical storm of the season formed about 125 miles off the Dominican Republic, Tropical Storm Alpha.

Just five months into the six-month

Atlantic hurricane season, the annual list of storm names had already been exhausted and forecasters had to turn to the Greek alphabet for the first time in six decades of naming storms.

In Key West, one resident who had yet to heed the evacuation order summed up the feelings of many Floridians when he heard about Alpha.

"Oh, lovely, that's nice," said a sarcastic John Cline, a guest house worker having a drink at Mangoe's Restaurant on Duval Street in Key West. "Will it ever end?"

As residents boarded up windows and some fled Wilma's path, state and federal officials prepared for Wilma, expected to make landfall on Florida's gulf coast Monday morning. It would be the eighth hurricane to hit or at least brush Florida since August 2004.

**U.S. forces kill insurgents sheltering foreign militants**

BAGHDAD, Iraq — U.S. troops and warplanes killed 20 insurgents Saturday while destroying safehouses for foreign militants near the Syrian border, and four more American military deaths edged the war's U.S. death toll closer to 2,000.

Iraqi election officials, meanwhile, said no significant fraud had been detected in last weekend's constitutional referendum as they released partial results. Officials indicated the final count would not come for at least a few more days.

The day's heaviest fighting came when U.S.-led forces raided five houses suspected of sheltering foreign fighters in Husaybah, a town near Iraq's border with Syria, the military said. The troops reportedly killed 20 insurgents and captured one.

The raiders found two caches of small arms, ammunition, rocket-propelled grenades, mortar rounds and bomb-making materials, the military said. Troops set off a car bomb found near one of the buildings, and the Air Force then used precision-guided munitions to destroy the houses.

**Miller/Times argument goes public in newspaper**

WASHINGTON — In the latest fallout from the CIA leak investigation, reporter Judith Miller and The New York Times are engaging in a very public fight about her seeming lack of candor in the case.

In a memo to the staff, Executive Editor Bill Keller wrote Miller "seems to have misled" the newspaper's Washington bureau chief, Phil Taubman, who said Miller told him in the fall of 2003 that she was not one of the recipients of a leak about the identity of covert CIA officer Valerie Plame.

Miller said Keller's criticism is "seriously inaccurate."

"I certainly never meant to mislead Phil, nor did I mislead him," Miller was quoted as saying in a Times story Saturday.

According to a Times story on Oct. 16, Miller told Taubman two years ago that the subject of Bush administration critic Joseph Wilson and Wilson's wife, Plame, had come up in casual conversation with government officials, but that Miller said "she had not been at the receiving end of a concerted effort, a deliberate organized effort to put out information."

**Al-Zarqawi's connections grow with Iraq successes**

WASHINGTON — U.S. intelligence officials say Abu Musab al-Zarqawi has expanded his terrorism campaign

in Iraq to extremists in two dozen terror groups scattered across almost 40 countries, creating a network that rivals Osama bin Laden's.

In interviews, U.S. government officials said the threat to U.S. interests from al-Zarqawi compared with that from bin Laden, to whom al-Zarqawi pledged his loyalty one year ago.

The director of the National Counterterrorism Center considers bin Laden a strategic plotter who is deep in hiding and out of regular contact with his followers, while al-Zarqawi is involved broadly in planning scores of brutal attacks in Iraq.

"He is very much a daily, operational threat," said Scott Redd, who is in charge of the government's counterterrorism strategy and analysis.

In figures not made public before, counterterrorism officials say that al-Zarqawi's network of contacts has grown dramatically since the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and now includes associates in nearly 40 countries in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Europe.

**Croatian authorities kill birds to prevent flu spread**

ZDINCI, Croatia — Authorities in Croatia began killing thousands of domestic birds Saturday and ordered disinfection for a large area near a national park where six swans were found dead from bird flu.

Elsewhere, Russia reported a new outbreak of a lethal strain of bird flu, and Italy and Congo became the latest countries to ban imports of poultry from nations affected by the virus.

Croatian experts detected the virus in the swans late Friday after they were found dead at a fish farm near Zdenci national park. Samples were sent to a British lab to test for

the H5N1 strain that has devastated poultry stocks and killed 61 people in Asia the last two years.

The virus is spread by migrating wild birds and has recently been found in birds in Russia, Turkey and Romania, spurring efforts around the globe to contain its spread.

While H5N1 is easily transmitted between birds, it is hard for humans to contract. But experts fear it could mutate into a form of flu that is easily transmitted between humans and cause a pandemic that could kill millions.

**E-tutors help American students with math, science**

COCHIN, India — A few stars are still twinkling in the inky pre-dawn sky when Koyampurath Namitha arrives for work in a quiet suburb of this south Indian city. It's barely 4:30 a.m. when she grabs a cup of coffee and joins more than two dozen colleagues, each settling into a cubicle with a computer and earphones.

More than 7,000 miles away, in Glenview, Ill., outside Chicago, it's the evening of the previous day and 14-year-old Princeton John sits at his computer, barefoot and ready for his hourlong geometry lesson. The high school freshman puts on a headset with a microphone and clicks on computer software that will link him through the Internet to his tutor, Namitha, many time zones away.

It's called e-tutoring — yet another example of how modern communications, and an abundance of educated Asians, are broadening the boundaries of outsourcing and entering the minutiae of American life, from replacing a lost credit card and reading a CAT scan to helping revive a crashed computer.

— The Associated Press

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