

# Suicide blasts wound 100

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HILLAH, Iraq — Suicide bombers detonated explosives outside a Polish-run base Wednesday, killing 10 Iraqis and wounding more than 100 people, more than half of them coalition soldiers. The United States arrested seven guerrillas believed linked to al-Qaida in an early morning raid to the north.

The attack in Hillah, the third suicide bombing of security targets in two weeks, was part of a wider effort "to isolate us from the Iraqi people," coalition military commander Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez told reporters in Tikrit.

Coalition and military officials said at least 106 people were hurt in the blasts, which happened in the Hayy Babil neighborhood near Camp Charlie. The wounded

included 32 Iraqis and 26 Poles, as well as Hungarians, Bulgarians, Filipinos and an American.

The casualty toll could have been much higher had guards not opened fire and prevented the bombers from entering the camp. One truck exploded under the gunfire and another blew up after hitting a concrete barrier.

The 7:15 a.m. blasts — from 1,540 pounds of explosives — flattened 11 homes nearby and blew down the entire sides of several other houses in this town south of Baghdad.

Earlier Wednesday, U.S. troops arrested seven militants believed linked to al-Qaida in the turbulent city of Baqouba, north of the capital, the military said. It gave no details on the nationalities of the

militants. There was no indication the attacks and the U.S. raid were directly linked.

Troops from the 4th Infantry Division carried out the raid early Wednesday targeting an "anti-coalition cell" that might have ties to Osama bin Laden's terror group, a statement from the U.S. command said.

Suicide attacks have killed 300 people, mostly Iraqis, since the beginning of the year. They have fueled speculation that Islamic extremists, possibly linked to al-Qaida, were playing a greater role in the anti-coalition insurgency. U.S. military officials had believed the attacks were spearheaded by Saddam Hussein loyalists.

The stepped-up violence could be aimed at preventing U.S.

administrators from handing over power to the Iraqis on June 30, when Iraqi security forces would also take a more prominent role against the insurgency.

Two suicide bombings killed more than 100 Iraqis last week. Polish Gen. Mieczyslaw Bieniek, commander of the 9,500-member Polish military contingent, said Wednesday's bombings, about 55 miles south of the capital, were a "well-coordinated terrorist attack."

Mohyee Mokheef, a 50-year-old cafe owner who lives in the neighborhood, said he was having breakfast when he heard a faint first explosion and a second, louder one that shattered the windows in his home. He blamed al-Qaida and an Iraq-based group linked to it, Ansar al-Islam.

# Iranian villages devastated by train explosion

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEYSHABUR, Iran — Runaway train cars carrying a lethal mix of fuel and chemicals derailed, caught fire and then exploded hours later Wednesday in northeast Iran, killing more than 200 people, injuring at least 400 and leaving dozens trapped beneath crumbled mud homes.

Most of those reported dead were firefighters and rescue workers who had extinguished most of the blaze outside Neyshabur, an ancient city of 170,000 people in a farming region 400 miles east of the capital, Tehran.

The dead also included top city officials — including Neyshabur's governor, mayor and fire chief as well as the head of the energy department and the director-general of the provincial railways — who had all gone to the site of the derailment, the official Islamic Republic News Agency reported.

The explosion devastated five villages, where authorities rushed in blood supplies and appealed through loudspeakers for donors. Hardest hit was Hashemabad,

where 41-year-old Zahra Rezaie, whose mud home was near the tracks, was cooking lunch for her family when she heard the explosion and felt the ground shake. Then the ceiling collapsed.

"I was sure it was an earthquake, and my first thought was to rush to the school and save my children," Rezaie told The Associated Press.

An AP photographer who arrived in Dehnow, one of the most severely damaged villages close to the train tracks about 500 yards from the blast, said most of the village's homes were flattened.

"The houses are all built of clay, and nearly every one has been destroyed, like they had collapsed in an earthquake," Hassan Sarbakhshian said. "Everyone appears to have been evacuated," he said, adding he could see thick, black smoke billowing about 500 yards ahead.

The blast was so powerful that windows were shattered as far as six miles away. In an apparent indication of the explosion's force, Iranian seismologists recorded a 3.6-magnitude tremor in the area.

# Marriages continue as legal fight grows

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN FRANCISCO — After two judges declined to end San Francisco's same-sex wedding spree immediately, the mayor said the city would keep issuing marriage licenses to gay couples as conservative groups vowed to take their case to higher courts.

During separate hearings Tuesday, a pair of Superior Court judges ruled that they were not yet prepared to prohibit city officials from engaging in the collective act of civil disobedience that has allowed more than 2,600 same-sex couples to be married at City Hall since Thursday.

"There was nothing particularly compelling after today that makes me think that we should back off," Mayor Gavin Newsom said in announcing that the city would go on sanctioning same-sex unions until told otherwise by the courts.

At the same time, it remains uncertain just how long San Francisco's unprecedented wedding march will go on. After denying an anti-gay marriage group's request for a temporary restraining order strictly on procedural grounds, one judge scheduled a Friday hearing on the matter.

In the other case, Superior Court Judge James L. Warren refused to grant a different group's petition for a stay that would have abruptly halted the weddings. He said the plaintiffs had not met the legal burden required for such an emergency order.

Warren did, however, agree to order the city to either "cease and desist" issuing the disputed licenses or to come back to court March 29 and explain why they haven't, a ruling that attorneys for both sides claimed as a victory.

"The judge would not issue a

cease and desist order unless the judge made a determination that the mayor is in violation" of the law, said Robert Tyler, a lawyer for the Proposition 22 Legal Defense and Education Fund, an anti-gay marriage group.

But City Attorney Dennis Herrera insisted the judge had made no such determination and that the city had scored a major triumph by getting six more weeks to issue marriage licenses to gay couples and the chance to argue its case "on the merits."

"We believe we have very strong arguments," Herrera said.

Newsom maintains he had the

legal authority to direct the county clerk to allow same-sex couples to apply for marriage licenses because the California Constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Erwin Chemerinsky, a University of Southern California legal scholar, described Warren's ruling as a short-term victory for the city. But the final decision will ultimately rest with a higher court, Chemerinsky said.

"This is an issue that is going to be decided by the California Supreme Court," he said. "These are just the early stages of what's going to be a long legal battle."

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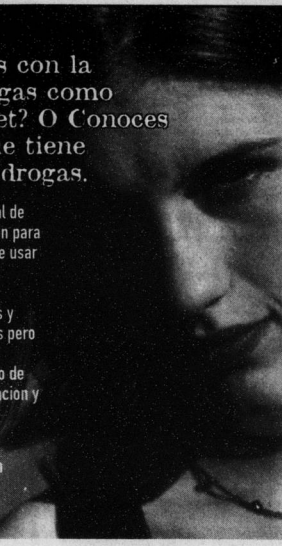
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Choose the next  
**DTH Editor**

The Daily Tar Heel is seeking students to serve on the panel that will choose the editor of the DTH for the 2004-2005 school year.

Applications for the seven at-large positions on the DTH Editor Selection Board are available at the DTH Office and the Carolina Union info desk kiosk.

Applicants must be available for an orientation meeting from 5-6pm Thursday, March 18 and from approximately 8:30am-4pm Saturday, March 20 to conduct interviews and make the selection.

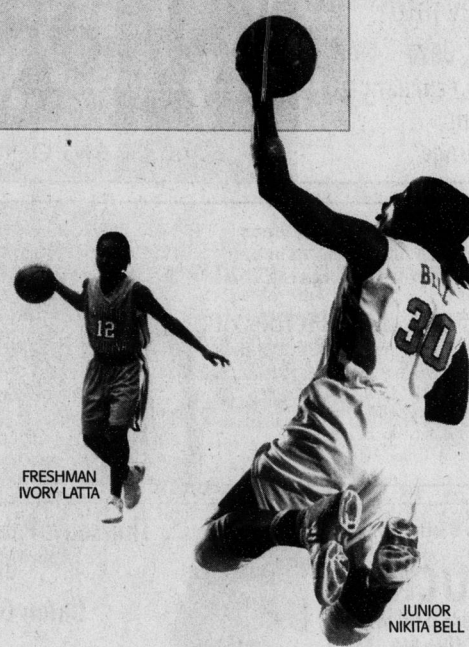
All students may apply for at-large positions except current DTH news staff members. If you have any questions about the process, please contact Elyse Ashburn (962-4086, [eashburn@email.unc.edu](mailto:eashburn@email.unc.edu)) or Chrissy Beck (962-0175, [cmbeck@email.unc.edu](mailto:cmbeck@email.unc.edu)).

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