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March 26, 2003

Vol. 71, No. 12 Hertford, North Carolina 27944

THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

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Grant funds heritage tourism portal

The Rural Internet Access Authority has awarded \$34,875 to the Perquimans County Chamber of Commerce for development of a heritage tourism web portal.

The project is known as The Perquimans County Heritage Tourism Portal: A Tool for Rural Economic Development. The grant will be used to design an Internet portal primarily to enhance tourism in Perquimans County. The funds were awarded as part of the e-NC Initiative, a statewide effort to connect all North Carolinas to the Internet.

"Tourism is fast-becoming an important tool for the economic development in Perquimans County and the entire Albemarle region," said Sid Eley, executive director of the Perquimans County Chamber of Commerce. "This Perquimans Tourism web portal can potentially bring the world to our doorstep."

The portal will serve the many public and private heritage tourism-related activities in the county and will include a schedule of events; walking and driving tours; sites of interest; historical information about the county; information about outdoor recreation, arts and cultural activities, lodging and dining and tourism-related offerings.

A task force of the Perquimans County Heritage Tourism Development Council is developing the content for the portal. Serving on the task force are Eley, Wendy Jewett, Bertha Dixon, Victor Eure, Phil McMullan, Jackie Hobbs, Mary White, Ron Carrier, Jeri Oltman, Larry Johnson, and LuAnne Pendergraft.

A tourism portal for Perquimans County was identified as a priority by the Perquimans county e-NC Steering Committee and was included as a goal in the report, e-Perquimans: Bridging the Digital and Economic Divide. Eure, who is the systemwide technology director for Perquimans County Schools serves as the e-Champion for Perquimans County.

The award to the Perquimans County Chamber of Commerce is from an RIAA e-communities implementation grant. E-communities implementation grant proposals were assessed on a competitive basis with funding awarded to those projects that displayed potential for long-term sustainability offered creative solutions, impacted the largest number of people, and had the potential to be replicated statewide.

Sandstorms slow march to Baghdad

U.S., British troops move closer to Iraqi capital

Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- Sandstorms slowed U.S. and British forces to a crawl and thwarted air missions Tuesday as U.S.-led forces edged closer to the Iraqi capital. Baghdad residents, hunkered down for an eventual battle, woke to howling winds and the distant crash of artillery.

Combat missions from two aircraft carriers were called back because of bad weather. At least a dozen planes returned without reaching Iraq. Two Army divisions were virtually stalled in a vicious sandstorm that reduced visibility to a few feet.

Thousands of Marines were trekking toward Baghdad, taking back roads to avoid civilians, but they traveled only about 20 miles in five hours with visibility at about 10 feet. A traffic jam of military and supply vehicles was buffeted by heavy winds and blowing sand.

Still, the Army's 3rd Infantry Division advanced to within 50 miles of Baghdad early Tuesday and pounded military installations with howitzers and rockets. U.S. warplanes and helicopters had come under heavy fire Monday during their first attacks on Saddam Hussein's elite ground units. In southern Iraq, tenacious resistance kept the coalition from securing key cities.

The helicopter assault on Saddam's elite Republican Guard units Monday was the first known engagement in central Iraq, and many U.S. aircraft were hit by Iraqi ground fire. About 10 Iraqi tanks were destroyed in the attack. One U.S. helicopter went down, and the Pentagon said two pilots had been taken prisoner -- Chief Warrant Officer



Ozler Muhammad/The New York Times

A convoy with the U.S. 1st Marine Division is protected by Marines sitting by the side of a road just north of the Euphrates river, Tuesday, March 25, 2003. A sandstorm was roaring through the region on Tuesday, leaving a yellow pall and dramatically reducing visibility.

Ronald D. Young Jr., 26, of Lithia Springs, Ga., and Chief Warrant Officer David S. Williams, 30, of Orlando, Fla.

U.S. officials said they believe Iraq is more likely to use chemical or biological weapons against coalition troops the closer they get to Baghdad. The Republican Guard controls the bulk of Iraq's chemical weaponry, most of which can be fired from artillery guns or short-range rocket launchers, according to U.S. officials.

A day after Saddam urged his people to resist the invaders in a rousing televised speech, Iraqis set up mortar positions and piled sandbags around government buildings and other strategic locations on the southern outskirts of the capital.

A pattern of deadly ambushes and ruse attacks by Iraqi militiamen in civilian clothes prevented coalition forces from securing the southern cities of Basra and An Nasiriyah and sporadic fighting thwarted efforts to extinguish burning oil fields.

British officials decided Tuesday to target pro-Saddam militiamen in Basra; previously coalition commanders had said they would avoid urban combat in Iraq's second-largest city.

"These things are never easy," British Prime Minister Tony Blair said Monday. "There will be some difficult times ahead, but (the war) is going to plan despite the tragedies."

Heavy fighting continued in An Nasiriyah, considered a strategic prize because of its bridges across the Euphrates. Navy pilots pounded Iraqi artillery and ammunition posts about 45 miles northwest of Basra overnight into Tuesday morning, U.S. officials said. Two British soldiers were killed at Az Zubayr, an Iraqi navy port not far from Basra.

Air Marshal Brian Burridge, commander of British forces in the Gulf, said a Baath party headquarters in Az Zubayr was targeted late Monday by the First Battalion Black Watch, whose members are mostly from Scotland.

"We went to their head-



Ian Jones

Members of British 16 Air Assault Brigade, 3 Army Air Corps, patrol the desert around the oil fields of North Rameila, Iraq during a sandstorm Tuesday.

quarters and engaged in contact with them ... and made it quite clear to them: We, the British forces, are up for this, and you are going to have a very hard time," Burridge told British Broadcasting Corp. radio Tuesday.

At least one Baath party

official was captured and 20 were killed in the operation, which was over within hours, British spokesman Col. Chris Vernon told the BBC.

Troops advancing toward Baghdad said they were prepared for the fight ahead, despite news of fallen comrades. At least 20 U.S. troops have been killed and 14 captured or missing since the operation began.

"I think the deaths of Americans gives us more incentive to fight," said Lance Cpl. Chad Borgmann, 23, of Sidney, Neb., with the 15th Marine Expeditionary Force. "Freeing Iraq is all fine and dandy ... but this gives us a personal motivation to fight."

Elsewhere, loud explosions were heard Tuesday near the northern oil center of Kirkuk, but people in the Kurdish-held city of Chamchamal, about 30 miles to the west, did not see any planes in the sky. Coalition warplanes bombed Iraqi military barracks in the area on Monday.

In Washington, President Bush said he would ask Congress for \$75 billion for the Iraq mission and to upgrade counterterrorism efforts at home. The money would fund about six months of operations in Iraq, including stabilizing the country and sending troops home, according to an administration document obtained by The Associated Press, on Monday.

Also Monday, Bush spoke by phone with Russian President Vladimir Putin, complaining that Russia was selling anti-tank missiles, jamming devices and night-vision goggles to Iraq -- a violation of U.N. sanctions. Russian officials hotly denied the accusations Tuesday.

"We did not send any goods, including military ones, that violated the sanctions," Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov said. "No fact supporting the Americans' anxiety has been found."

Key developments in Iraq Looking for hometown heroes

● In an about-face, British forces said Tuesday they have decided to move against militia fighters who have prevented them from securing the southern Iraqi city of Basra. Sandstorms slowed U.S. and British forces to a crawl and thwarted air missions Tuesday as U.S.-led forces edged closer to the Iraqi capital. Baghdad residents, hunkered down for an eventual battle, woke to howling winds and the distant crash of artillery.

● U.S. forces used air power, helicopters and artillery to soften Republican Guard positions before ground troops move ahead in the battle for Baghdad.

● About 500 Iraqi fighters have been killed in the last two days by the 3rd Infantry Division's tanks and mechanized units as they swept through southern Iraq, according to reports reaching ground forces command.

● Troops farther south were facing deadly ambushes and discovering that many Iraqi fighters had discarded their uniforms for civil-

ian clothes.

● British forces took on irregular forces in southern Iraq overnight, and a second British soldier died in fighting there, British officials said Tuesday.

● Gen. Tommy Franks said Saddam's regime is weakened but still issuing orders to military units -- which are not always complying. Franks said his forces have captured 3,000 prisoners.

● Iraqi state television showed two men said to have been the U.S. crew of an Apache helicopter forced down in central Iraq. The Pentagon identified the missing men as Chief Warrant Officer Ronald D. Young Jr., 26, of Lithia Springs, Ga., and Chief Warrant Officer David S. Williams, 30, of Florida.

● In hopes of showing that he remained at the helm, Saddam boasted in a televised speech that "victory will be ours soon." U.S. and British officials said the language was so general that it was unclear when the tape was made.

The Perquimans Weekly is seeking the names of those with ties to Perquimans County who are serving in Iraq.

Please call 426-5728, fax 426-4625 or email perquimansweekly@earthlink.net or pwpublisher@earthlink.net to send us the names of those serving as soon as possible. We would also like to know the branch of service, the rank, the names of parents, grandparents or spouses and children with ties to Perquimans County, the year they graduated from Perquimans County High School if applicable and a mailing address. Photographs will also be accepted.

We will periodically publish a list of those who are serving throughout the war.

It is the hope of the management and staff of The Perquimans Weekly that the community will support the families of these brave men and women as they face these days of uncertainty and fear. Next week we will publish an

article on what you can send to military personnel and how it must be sent.

WEEKEND WEATHER

THURSDAY
High: 64
Low: 44
PARTLY CLOUDY

FRIDAY
High: 66
Low: 51
PARTLY CLOUDY

SATURDAY
High: 71
Low: 55
MOSTLY CLOUDY