

IRON STRONG DAILY



PAGE 1

OCT. 03, 2008

Morning prayers heard again in Samarra shrine amidst peace

**Story and photos by
Maj. Johnpaul Arnold
Multi-National Division--North PAO**

After two years of silence enforced by sectarian violence, prayers of Shia worshippers were echoed in Samarra's majestic Maqam Ghaybat Shrine, which is co-located with the ancient Al Askari Shrine.

Shia faithful gathered in the cool of the morning to pray to commemorate the end of Ramadan.

The Maqam Ghabat Shrine is known to Shia Muslims as the location of the "occultation" or hidden state, of the 12th Imam, Ya Aba Salih Al-Mahdi.

"Hundreds of people were at the Mosque for the Eid celebration," said Samarra Operation Center Commander Maj. Gen. Rasheed Flahe Mohammed, a Shia himself. "Today we are celebrating in the mosque. We are very happy," he said.

The Samarra Operation Command's comprehensive security strategy has bolstered the confidence and courage of the citizens of Samarra. Elements from the National Police, Iraqi Army and local Sunni Sons of Iraq have provided security contributions.

"After five years Samarra achieved a lot of services. Thanks go to the Iraqi Police, Iraqi Army, Sons of Iraq and support of



The Samarra Mayor Mahmood Khalaf Ahmed talks with reporters about the opening of the majestic Maqam Ghaybat Shrine, which is co-located with the Al Askari Shrine, Iraq. This is the first time the shrine has been opened in two years, due to sectarian violence in the area.

See *Shrine* on Page 3

Country singer croons favorites for Soldiers



(ABOVE) Performing to a standing room only crowd on a makeshift amphitheater, country singing legend Trace Adkins delivered a morale boosting concert for Soldiers on Forward Operating Base Marez, in Mosul, Iraq. Currently on his second USO Tour, Adkins said this was his way of saying thank you to

(BELOW) Soldiers at the Trace Adkins concert went wild when he walked on stage to start his performance on Forward Operating Base Marez, in Mosul, Iraq. As a veteran USO Tour performer, Adkins said he puts his money where his mouth is by showing his support for the Soldiers through his live concerts in theater.



**Story and photos by
Pfc. Adam Carl Blazak
11th Public Affairs Detachment**

Hundreds of country fans gathered around an outdoor concert venue to watch Nashville-groomed, Trace Adkins, perform live on Forward Operating Base Marez, Mosul, Iraq.

“I came here for the wives, husbands, children and friends to say thanks and that we love you and we are proud of you,” Adkins said. “I’m just here to relay the message.”

“Some people say they support the Troops, but they don’t do anything,” he said. “At some point, you got to throw down the pompoms and get in the game.”

“I’m not really a country fan, but I think it’s awesome that he took the time to come over and do a show for us,” said Spc. Elisa B. Scott, a first timer for a country music concert. “T.A. delivered like Dominoes!”

This is the country legend’s second USO Tour in the Persian Gulf. After his first stint in 2002, Adkins left with a bittersweet feeling.

“I get this inadequate feeling,” Adkins modestly said. “You feel like you didn’t do enough. You deserve the best

See **Concert** on Page 3

Commanding General: Maj. Gen. Mark P. Hertling
Public Affairs Officer: Maj. Margaret Kageleiry
Public Affairs NCOIC: Master Sgt. Nancy Morrison

Contributing Writers: Maj. Johnpaul Arnold, Pfc. Adam Carl Blazak
Layout and Design: Spc. Karla P. Elliott, 14th PAD
Editor: Staff Sgt. Mark Albright, 14th Public Affairs Detachment

Contact the *Iron Strong* at VOIP: 242-1190, DSN: 318-849-0089 or email mark.albright@iraq.centcom.mil

The “Iron Strong” is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. Army. Contents of the “Iron Strong” are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army or the Task Force Iron. All editorial content of this publication is prepared, edited, provided and approved by the Task Force Iron Public Affairs Office.

Concert from Page 2

and all you got was me.”

Adkins drew a large crowd to the outdoor concert saying his favorite song to sing is the one, which the crowd reacts to the most.

“Even though it’s a couple years old, they still react to Honky Tonk Badonkadonk,” he said. “And I do too.”

One song that hits home to many Soldiers is Arlington, he said.

“When I’m performing Arlington in front of a crowd of service people, it’s hard to describe what it feels like,” he said. “Some people do take comfort from it.”

Though it was just his second day in theater, Adkins already had strong memories from what he saw.

“This just shows how proud we can be,” he said.



Feeling the lyrics of his song, Trace Adkins woos his audience with one of his hits, country ballads during a concert held on Forward Operating Base Marez, Mosul, Iraq. This was Adkin’s second concert during his 10-day USO Tour.



The Samarra and Coalition Force leadership hold a joint press conference about the improved security and economic opportunities in Samarra, Iraq. The majestic Maqam Ghaybat Shrine reopened after more than two years of silence, allowing Shia worshippers to pray in the early morning. This significant day for Iraq and Samarra would not be possible without an 85 percent reduction in attacks due to the comprehensive security plan. On the photo from left to right are 2nd Bn., 327 Inf. Regt., 1st BCT, 101st Airborne Division Commander Lt. Col. JP McGee, Mayor Mahmood Khalaf Ahmed, Samarra Operation Center Commander Maj. Gen. Rasheed Flahe Mohammed and local Sons of Iraq leader Abu Mohammed Suhail Al Abassi.

Shrine from Page 1

Coalition Forces,” said Samarra Mayor Mahmood Khalaf Ahmed.

Within the last twelve months, enemy attacks in Samarra peaked to over 80 per month in December 2007. Then a dramatic turn of events occurred throughout the spring of 2008. The Sunni population of Samarra turned against Al Qaeda and helped drive them from the city. Monthly attack numbers faded below 20, then 10.

2nd Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division Commander Lt. Col. J.P. McGee said, “A year ago the city was in the grips of terrorists, and we as a team set out to destroy the foundation of fear that paralyzed any progress in the city. Because of the active support of the population and the close cooperation of ISF, what we have been able to do as American Forces is to shift our focus from fighting the insurgents to help rebuild the city.”

Samarra citizens told McGee that Ramadan festivities have not seen such a peaceful setting since 2003,

he said.

The rebuilding of the Al Askari Shrine or Golden Dome Mosque is vital for the future of Samarra and Iraq, yet the reconstruction of the city is crucial for its citizens.

“I wish to see more improvement. As you know Samarra had suffered a lot,” said Mayor Ahmed. “It is going to take a long time to get Samarra where it was.”

To spur reconstruction efforts throughout Iraq, the Government of Iraq established national Iraqi project funds called Iraqi Commanders Emergency Response Program, which symbolizes the statement, ‘made, paid and approved by Iraq – for Iraq.’ Samarra has received over \$1.5 million of Government of Iraq finances to pay for schools, market renovation, market solar lights, factory repairs and civic building restoration.

The reverberation of morning prayers in one of its sacred mosques coupled with a unified security team will allow for more continued work on Samarra’s essential services and economy.

PENNSYLVANIA



(AP) Empty pasture is all that's left on the site of one-room Amish schoolhouse where two years ago a gunman's attack left five girls dead and five others wounded, and the anniversary of the massacre was expected to pass quietly.

"We're going to try to go on with just a normal day," Bart Township Fire Chief Curt Woerth said of events Thursday. "We've been in contact with the families — they don't want anything, and neither do we, really."

On Wednesday, local Amish people could be seen mowing lawns, working on farms and tending home-based businesses. Several refused to comment on the anniversary.

A year ago, on the first anniversary, state troopers and other guests joined Amish families for a private gathering at the home of a family that lost a child in the tragedy. They prayed and sang together and shared a meal to mark the occasion.

The New Hope Amish School was to be closed Thursday, said teacher Emma Mae Zook. It replaced the schoolhouse where 32-year-old milk truck driver Charlie Roberts barricaded himself and the girls before he shot them and killed himself with a 9 mm handgun.

Four of the five surviving girls have returned to classes, although some require continuing treatment for their wounds. The fifth remains in a nonresponsive coma, according to Dr. Holmes Morton, a physician who runs the Clinic for Special Children in nearby Strasburg.

Millions of dollars in donations poured in following the tragedy, and that money is being used to pay the victims' expenses. The Nickel Mines Accountability Committee, which was established to field the donations, is now entirely in Amish hands.

IDAHO

(AP) Rose Harn peers out at the world with one working eye, her arms curled tightly against her shriveled body. A rag under her chin catches her drool.

In the two decades since Harn was left brain-damaged and paralyzed by a 16-year-old driver, her husband has taken her to numerous Mothers Against Drunk Driving events in Idaho as an object lesson in the consequences of drinking and driving.

But that was before MADD removed Harn as a volunteer at its booth at a state fair last month amid complaints that the sight of her was too disturbing.

The Harns have filed a discrimination complaint with the Idaho Human Rights Commission against MADD and the company that operated the fair. MADD is taking a closer look at its practice of bringing accident victims to public events. And the incident has stirred up townspeople in this community of 50,000, situated in a sugar beet- and onion-growing region 20 miles from Boise.

Exactly what happened at the fair is in dispute, and the state agency is investigating. MADD, for its part, said it feared trouble at the fair and acted out of concern for Harn's safety.

In 1986, his wife was left blind in one eye, paralyzed on her right side and unable to speak after a teenager who had been drinking ran a stop sign and plowed into her car. The crash nearly severed her brain stem, putting her in a coma for about 18 months.

The 58-year-old mother of three lives on a wheeled bed. Because she can no longer swallow, she relies on a feeding tube inserted in her abdomen. According to her husband, she is aware of most of what is going on around her, blinking once for yes, moving her head slowly from side to side for no.

Since the accident, Mike Harn, 64, has arranged for his wife to appear at numerous MADD events, including about a dozen state and county fairs by his count.

At MADD's request, the Harns went to the Western Idaho Fair on Aug. 19 to volunteer. Less than an hour later, a fair employee asked them to leave because of objections that Rose Harn was "too graphic" and that her husband had put her on display, Mike Harn said. He refused to go.

"The comments that people

were making about Rose, I think were horrible. If that was the main issue, I would have said, 'Too bad. We support our volunteers,'" Aburusa said. But "I was worried that the sheriff was going to show up. I didn't want to send Rose out there. I did not want to send them into a riot."

Harn has since cut ties with MADD.

Aburusa said she has heard conflicting accounts of whether a fair employee actually told Rose Harn to leave. Rich Wright, a spokesman for Ada County, which oversees the fair, said: "It would be surprising to us if this indeed did happen." An attorney for Spectra Productions, the company that operated the fair, refused to comment.

But fairgoer Richard Cirelli said he was standing nearby when a female fair employee approached the Harns. "I remember her saying something about getting lots of phone calls because Rose was offensive," Cirelli said. "That was the word she used. It just hit me wrong."

In a statement on the Idaho chapter's Web site, MADD's national office said: "We are taking a closer look at how presentations by volunteers that include victim/survivors, are carried out in the best interest of the family and the public."

If the sight of Harn makes people uncomfortable, that is the point, said Dicksie Luke of Court Referral Services, a business that arranges appearances by her at court-ordered traffic-safety courses for offenders.

"They need to see Rose to understand," Luke said.





BASEBALL

(AP) No matter how much the Los Angeles Angels dominate Boston in the regular season, the Red Sox roll in October.

Jason Bay hit a go-ahead, two-run homer off John Lackey in the sixth inning, and the World Series champions beat the Angels 4-1 Wednesday night in the opener of their AL playoff series.

Acquired in the three-team trade that sent Manny Ramirez to the Los Angeles Dodgers, Bay brought Boston back from a 1-0 deficit in the first postseason game of his career, and the Red Sox got a big start from John Lester (1-0), who allowed only an unearned run in seven innings.

"It's big. Any time you can come into another team's ballpark and win is huge," Lester said.

FOOTBALL

(Reuters) Former National Football League running back Travis Henry has been arrested following an alleged cocaine deal in Colorado, federal authorities said on Wednesday.

Henry, 29, and another man were arrested on Tuesday following a "multi-kilogram cocaine transaction" that allegedly occurred in the Denver suburb of Centennial, Colorado, the

Los Angeles won eight of nine regular-season games between the teams this year, outscoring the Red Sox 42-17 in the final six. But the Red Sox have won 10 straight postseason games against the Angeles dating to 1986, including first-round sweeps in 2004 and 2007 en route to World Series titles.

Boston tied a major league record for consecutive postseason wins over the same opponent, a mark Oakland set against the Red Sox from 1988-03.

The Angels will try to draw even Friday night in Game 2 of the

best-of-five series, with Ervin Santana pitching against Boston's Daisuke Matsuzaka.

While just four of 28 teams to lose NL division series openers have come back to win series, it's been an even 14-14 split in the AL, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

With Boston clinging to a 2-1 lead and rookie Justin Masterson on the mound, Jacoby Ellsbury made a great diving catch on Mark Teixeira's sinking fly to center starting the eighth. Vladimir Guerrero followed with a single before Torii Hunter blooped a hit over first baseman Kevin Youkilis, who quickly recovered and easily threw out Guerrero at third.

Ellsbury and David Ortiz added RBI singles in the ninth off Scot Shields, and Jonathan Papelbon finished for his fifth postseason save, extending his postseason scoreless streak to 15 2-3

innings.

The Angels broke on top with an unearned run in the third on Hunter's two-out, RBI single. Garret Anderson hit a one-out single and, after Teixeira struck out, rookie shortstop Jed Lowrie muffed Guerrero's grounder before Hunter lined a 1-2 pitch to left that dropped in front of Bay.

Lowrie, making his postseason debut, set a major league record for rookie shortstops by handling 155 chances without an error in 49 games at that position during the regular season.

Bay hit an 0-1 pitch far over the left-field fence with Youkilis aboard. He flipped his bat as he began his home run trot upon leaving the batter's box, long before the ball landed in the seats beyond the double-decker bullpen.

Bay, who hadn't faced Lackey previously, looked bad in striking out in his first two at-bats in. He also doubled in the eighth.

"I was trying to get used to the game," Bay said. "I had never seen him before."

Lester got the Game 1 assignment after Josh Beckett was pushed back to Game 3 because of an oblique problem. He retired his final seven batters, striking out four, and only one outfielder had a putout during his stint. Lester struck out seven and walked one.

The Angels, who wrapped up the AL West title with 2 1/2 weeks left in the regular season, finished with a franchise-best 100-62 record that was tops in the majors. But they lost for the eighth time in 10 postseason home games since winning the 2002 World Series.

Lackey, who won Game 7 of that World Series, allowed two runs and four hits in 6 2-3 innings with three walks and five strikeouts.

Drug Enforcement Administration said.

The suspects were being held pending the filing of federal drug charges in U.S. District Court later on Wednesday in Denver.

A Pro Bowl running back in 2002, Henry played seven years in the NFL with Buffalo, Tennessee and Denver. He played in 12 games with the Broncos last season, rushing for 691 yards and four touchdowns.



AUSTRALIA

(AFP) An offbeat suggestion that Australians should eat kangaroos instead of cattle and sheep has been given a scientific stamp of approval by the government's top climate change adviser.

The belching and farting of millions of farm animals is a major contributor to Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, Professor Ross Garnaut noted in a major report to the government on global warming.

Kangaroos, on the other hand, emit negligible amounts of methane gas.

If farmers were included in a system requiring industry to buy permits for the gas they produce, the cost of meat would rise and could lead to a change in eating habits, Garnaut said in the 600 page report released Wednesday.

"For most of Australia's human history -- around 60,000 years -- kangaroo was the main source of meat," he said.

"It could again become important. However, there are some significant barriers to this change, including livestock and farm management issues, consumer resistance and the gradual nature of change in food tastes."

Garnaut cited a study looking at the potential for kangaroos to replace sheep and cattle for meat production in Australia's rangelands, where kangaroos are already harvested.

The study concludes that by 2020, beef cattle and sheep numbers could be reduced by seven million and 36 million respectively, allowing for an increase in kangaroo numbers from 34 million now to 240 million by 2020.

This would be more than enough to replace the lost lamb and beef production, and kangaroo meat would become more profitable than cattle and sheep as the price of emissions permits increased.

Garnaut's report said livestock, mainly cattle and sheep, are responsible for some 67 percent of agricultural greenhouse gas emissions.

Despite being the national animal and appearing on the Australian coat of arms, millions of kangaroos are slaughtered in the wild each year to control their numbers and much of the meat is used for pet food.

The idea of farming them for human consumption is controversial, but many health-conscious Australians already eat kangaroo meat.

"It's low in fat, it's got high protein levels, it's very clean in the sense that basically it's the ultimate free range animal," says Peter Ampt of the University of New South Wales's institute of environmental studies.



SOUTH KOREA



(AP) One of South Korea's most popular actresses was found dead Thursday in an apparent suicide, police said.

Choi Jin-sil, whose fame earned her the nickname "The Nation's Actress," is believed to have hanged herself in the bathroom of her Seoul home, said Yang Jae-ho, chief investigator at Seoul's Seocho Police Station.

"It's obviously suicide," Yang told reporters, citing a doctor's examination of Choi's body and testimony from family members and friends. He said an investigation was under way.

No formal suicide note has been found, but Choi sent her makeup assistant cell phone text messages twice Wednesday night asking her to "take care of (my) children no matter what happens" and telling her that "I'm sorry," the investigator said.

Her death comes a month after the suicide of a fellow actor rumored to have owed her a large amount of money.

Choi's mother told police that the actress returned home drunk around midnight Wednesday, crying and denying the rumor, before going into the bathroom, Yang said.

Choi made her debut in the late 1980s and as a bright-eyed ingenue, quickly becoming one of South Korea's best-loved actresses. She starred in a number of box-office hits, including the films "My Love, My Bride" of 1990 and "How to Top My Wife" of 1994, and TV dramas such as "Jealousy," "My Rosy Life" and last year's "Bad Woman, Good Woman."

The actress was preparing for the second season of the TV drama "The Last Scandal of My Life" in which she played a woman who finds love with a top actor after a painful divorce.

Choi herself had gone through a difficult divorce in recent years. She had married baseball star Cho Sung-min in 2000 while he was playing for the Japanese pro baseball team Yomiuri Giants, but they divorced in 2004, with the deterioration of their relationship becoming tabloid fodder. They had two children.

A friend of Choi's told police that the actress had worried about raising the children after the divorce and about her future as an actress and often said she wanted to die, police investigator Yang said.

Her mother also told police that Choi had shown signs of depression after the divorce and had been taking a sedative, Yang said.

Choi reportedly had been under stress following the rumors that she had lent money to actor Ahn Jae-hwan, who was found dead in his car last month after committing suicide.

Choi denied the rumors and asked police to investigate who circulated the claims that Ahn killed himself after Choi pressured him to repay the debt.

Yang said a securities firm employee and another suspect are under investigation for defamation.