

# THE BATTALION

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## Coalition soldiers liberate Baghdad, tear down statue

By Ravi Nessman and Devid Espo  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Their hour of freedom at hand, jubilant Iraqis celebrated the collapse of Saddam Hussein's murderous regime on Wednesday, beheading a toppled statue of their longtime ruler in downtown Baghdad and embracing American troops as liberators.

"I'm 49, but I never lived a single day. Only now will I start living," said Yussuf Abed Kazim, a mosque preacher. A young Iraqi spat on a portrait of Saddam. Men hugged Americans in full combat gear, and women held up babies so soldiers riding on tanks could kiss them.

Iraqis released decades of pent-up fury as U.S. forces solidified their grip on the capital. Marine tanks rolled to the eastern bank of the Tigris River; the Army was on the western side of the waterway that curls through the ancient city.

Looting broke out in the capital as Iraqis, shedding their fear of the regime, entered government facilities and made off with furniture, computers, air conditioners and even military jeeps.

"We are not seeing any organized resistance," said Navy Capt. Frank Thorp at the U.S. Central Command. "The Iraqi military is unable to fight as an organized fighting force." And Maj. Gen. Buford C. Blount III, commander of the Army's 3rd Infantry Division, told reporters that "the end of the combat phase is days away."

At a Pentagon briefing, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said Saddam "is taking his rightful place" alongside such brutal dictators of the past as Adolf Hitler, Josef Stalin and Vladimir Lenin.

And while Rumsfeld and other American officials cautioned that combat may lie ahead, Iraq's U.N. ambassador told reporters that "the game is over, and I hope peace will prevail." Mohammed Al-Douri's comments to reporters in New York were the

first admission by an Iraqi official that Saddam's forces had been overwhelmed.

There was continued combat in cities to the north, though, where government troops were under attack from U.S. and British warplanes.

The scenes of liberation in Baghdad and celebrations in scattered other cities unfolded as the Pentagon announced that 101 American troops had died in the first three weeks of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Eleven others are missing and seven are listed as captured. The British said 30 of their troops were dead. There are no reliable estimates for Iraqi casualties, although an Army spokesman said 7,300 prisoners had been taken.

The medical system was overrun with civilian casualties in Basra and Baghdad, cities where some of the fiercest fighting has occurred. Doctors said 35 bodies and as many as 300 wounded Iraqis were brought

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TOM PENNINGTON • KRT CAMPUS

Iraqi Kurds celebrate in the streets of Sulaymaniya, Iraq, after hearing that U.S. troops have taken control of the streets of Baghdad Wednesday. Saddam is responsible for killing more than 5,000 Kurds during a chemical attack in a small village near Sulaymaniya years ago.

### Park planning



RANDAL FORD • THE BATTALION

Senior landscape architecture majors **Megan Holder**, right, and **Cassie King**, work on schematic landscape drawings for a competition among other landscape architecture students. The competition involves designing a landscape

park that will be set in West University Houston. Next Monday, about 20 students will present their final designs to the West University City Council, who will judge their work for the final competition.

## Board of Regents to elect chairman

By Rolando Garcia  
THE BATTALION

Two appointees to the Texas A&M System Board of Regents will be sworn in today and the board, still one member short, will also elect a chairman.

Gov. Rick Perry reappointed Erle Nye to the board and appointed Houston attorney John White on April 2. Both testified before the state Senate nominations committee Monday and were approved by the full Senate Tuesday. White will replace outgoing Regent Dionel Aviles.

Perry has not yet announced a replacement for outgoing Regent Anne Armstrong.

Nye, the CEO of TXU Corp., a Dallas-based energy conglomerate, was appointed to the board in 1997 and has served as chairman since 2001. Nye said one of his top priorities for his second six-year term is to make A&M more accessible by keeping tuition affordable and reaching out to minorities to make the University more diverse.

With state budget cuts looming, A&M University System officials are supporting a legislative bill that would permit the Board of Regents to raise tuition as much as three

times what is currently charged without approval from the state Legislature. Nye said regents would take students' interests into consideration before exercising their tuition-setting authority.

"We have to seek additional funding sources for the University, but it can't all be on the backs of students," Nye said. "And we need to fold a fair amount (of revenue from tuition hikes) back into scholarships and grants."

White, a fifth-generation rancher, said he has an appreciation for the importance of A&M's agricultural programs. He said the priorities A&M President Robert M. Gates has established for the University could be used as a blueprint for other schools in the system. Gates has said he will focus on four of the 12 Vision 2020 imperatives: elevating the faculty, improving undergraduate and graduate programs, increasing space and improving diversity.

Nye and White remained non-committal on the question of whether they would support racial preferences if the U.S. Supreme Court ruled race could be a factor in admissions and financial aid.

White said the top 10 percent

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## Fish Drill team reinstated

By Rob Phillips  
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M Corps of Cadets Commandant Lt. Gen. John Van Alstyne lifted the temporary suspension of the Fish Drill Team and allowed it to practice Wednesday afternoon, said Anthony Groves, the Corps' assistant commandant for operations and training.

Van Alstyne halted the unit's drill practices Saturday and allowed Corps officials to investigate an alleged altercation between several freshmen cadets Friday afternoon.

"The investigation indicated it was not a Fish Drill team problem; it was an individual problem," Groves said. "The Fish Drill Team is back in operation."

In a statement released by the Corps Thursday morning, "A personal dispute between two freshmen cadets escalated to involve other members of the team."

The unit has been authorized to resume practice in preparation for a Parents' Weekend performance on Sunday, according to the statement.

The drill team is scheduled to perform in Kyle Field, Groves said.

Groves said there will most likely be disciplinary action taken against seven individuals, six of whom are Fish Drill team members. The seventh individual is not a member, he said.

Officials were notified of an incident Friday in which a group of cadets allegedly vandalized another cadet's dorm

room. Five freshmen cadets allegedly confronted another drill team member who was not getting along with other members. The cadets ransacked the member's room when the cadet was gone, removing all his belongings from the closet and drawers and leaving them scattered on the floor.

The freshman precision rifle squad was reinstated last year after being disbanded in 1997 due to a hazing incident in which a freshman cadet accused older members of physical abuse. Criminal charges were brought against nine students.

In March, the drill team finished second out of 50 teams in the annual Tulane University Individual Drill Meet. The unit was the only team composed of all freshmen.

## Students celebrate UniDiversity Day

By Bernhard Hall  
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M students and faculty will congregate in Rudder Tower Thursday for UniDiversity Day, an event focused on creating a more diverse campus.

The focal point of the event is an open discussion to be held at 10:15 a.m. for a plan to improve diversity, moderated by Dr. Howard Kaplan, distinguished Department of Sociology professor.

"We want to provide a platform for dialogue," said Roemer Visser, vice president of the International Graduate Student Association. "The purpose of the meeting is to basically say, 'Where do we want to go, and how do we want to get there?'"

Organizers of UniDiversity Day said they have put together an event that will bring together many student groups focusing on a variety of diversity issues.

"We have one of the most diverse groups ever," Visser said.

At 8:20 a.m., University President Robert M. Gates will start the day's events with an address entitled "Diversifying Texas A&M University."

Gates will speak again at 1 p.m. about the challenges of increasing diversity during a general session in Rudder 601.

Beginning at 1:15 p.m., four workshop sessions held by a diverse set of campus organizations will teach students about the dangers of stereotypes, Visser said.

Among the organizations represented are the Black Graduate Students Association, the Hispanic Graduate Students Association and the Rainbow Graduate Students Association. The Corps of Cadets and the Inter-Fraternity Council and Collegiate Panhellenic Council will also hold workshops.

Corps of Cadets public relations officer Burke

Wilson will discuss diversity issues facing the Corps.

"We are struggling with the diversity goals of the University as well," he said.

Wilson said he will provide a history of the Corps and discuss reasons behind some Corps activities, followed by an open discussion intended to allow students to discuss Corps stereotypes.

The morning session of UniDiversity Day will target faculty and graduate students, while the afternoon session is intended for undergraduates.

"We need help from the student population; we need them to attend, and we need them to

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## Bloc wins student senate speaker

By Brad Bennett  
THE BATTALION

A newly-elected Student Senate bloc that campaigned to make student government more responsive to students flexed its muscles Wednesday, capturing the top two leadership positions in the body.

In its first meeting, the 56th session of the Student Senate elected Matthew Wilkins, a Northside senator, as speaker, defeating long-time student senator Kevin Capps 31 to 21.



WILKINS

Senate and has been around for so long that nobody would dare run against him; he's become

"(Capps) is so entrenched in

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**UniDiversity Day**  
7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
Rudder, 6th floor: Registration  
8:20 a.m.  
"Diversifying Texas A&M"  
Robert M. Gates  
10:15 a.m.  
"Taking Action: Sharing Responsibility for Creating a More Diverse TAMU"  
Open Discussion  
12 p.m. - 1:05 p.m.  
General Session: Why Diversity?  
Rudder 601  
1:15 p.m. Minor Workshops  
3:30 p.m. - 4:50 p.m.  
Closing Session - Rudder 601

SOURCE: COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS • RUBEN DELUNA