

# THE BATTALION

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## Blackout shuts down B-CS area

By Roland Garcia  
THE BATTALION

Utility officials believe malfunctions originating in a power plant in Grimes County sparked regional power outages that left the Bryan-College Station area without electricity for nearly four hours Tuesday afternoon.

Sam Jones, the chief operating officer of the Electrical Reliability Council of Texas, which oversees the state's electrical transmission system, said the cause of the malfunction is unknown, but the problem began at the Gibbon's Creek Plant, near Carlos, Texas, in western Grimes County. Although the matter is still under investigation, Jones said utility officials suspect an equipment failure is at fault.

David Massey, assistant director

of College Station Public Utilities, said the nature and duration of the power outage was "highly unusual." Brazos County, along with parts of Burleson County, Grimes County and north Houston seem to be the only areas affected by the blackout.

With traffic lights down, College Station police directed traffic at major intersections. Although the city's fire and police departments were busy during the blackout, there were no major incidents, said College Station spokeswoman Patti Jett.

Power in the Bryan-College Station area went out at approximately 11:45 a.m., and was restored at about 3:30 p.m., Massey said.

Texas A&M Interim Provost David Prior announced at 2 p.m. that classes would be canceled and University offices would close for the rest of the afternoon.

"There was uncertainty as to

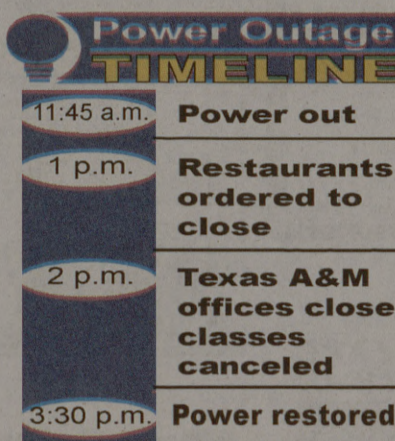
when the power would come back on," Prior said.

Prior, the University's second-highest administrator, made the decision because A&M President Robert M. Gates was out of town.

Jim Riley, director of University utilities, said backup generators provided power for emergency lighting, fire safety systems and other essential services.

The Brazos County Health Department announced at 1 p.m. that restaurants must close to avoid the risk of refrigerated food becoming contaminated.

Health officials made the decision because they feared power could be out for an extended period. Had the blackout lasted for more than four hours, regulations call for restaurants to throw away refriger-



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SOURCES: BRAZOS COUNTY HEALTH DEPT., COLLEGE STATION UTILITIES

ated food warmer than 45 degrees, said Don Plitt, assistant director of the Brazos County environmental health division.

## Forces search for weapons, Iraqi fighters

By Meg Richards  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

U.S. troops intensified the search for weapons of mass destruction and foreign fighters across Iraq on Tuesday, while the first post-Saddam Hussein meeting of the nation's fractious religious and political groups looked toward the future. The Bush administration hinted at economic or diplomatic sanctions against Syria.

The U.S.-sponsored forum in the ancient city of Ur, said to be the birthplace of biblical Abraham, brought together Kurds, Sunni and Shiite Muslims from inside the country as well as exiles. Thousands of Shiites whose representatives were boycotting the meeting staged street protests, chanting "No to America and no to Saddam!"

"It's critical that the world understand that this is only the fledgling first meeting of what will hopefully be a much larger series of meetings across Iraq," said Jim Wilkinson, spokesman at U.S. Central Command. It was an "unscripted, free-flowing forum of ideas" to get Iraqis talking about their desires for the future.

The gathering, held under a golden tent next to the famous ziggurat ruins, ended with an agreement to meet again in 10 days. White House envoy Zalmay Khalilzad told delegates that the United States has "no interest, absolutely no interest, in ruling Iraq."

In Tikrit, anger rose as Marines tightened their hold over Saddam Hussein's hometown. Tanks barred people from crossing over a Tigris River bridge that was heavily damaged in an airstrike, and many helicopters flew overhead.

Looters ransacked a government agriculture building, but there did not appear to be the widespread lawlessness seen in other fallen cities. Infuriated residents complained to a reporter that the bridge into town had been blocked for days; many said they were hungry and sick, but U.S. forces would not let them go to a hospital across the river.

"The Iraqi people want to go to their own parts of their territory — their own lands," one man yelled. "But the Americans are not letting them!" A Marine in a passing convoy shouted, "We're

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## Students enjoy free afternoon

By Brad Bennett  
THE BATTALION

Tuesday's city-wide power outage gave most area students an afternoon off from class and a chance to relax and enjoy a stress-free day.

One group especially excited about Tuesday's power outage were members of the Corps of Cadets, who were treated to an impromptu outdoor barbecue after Duncan Dining Hall was unable to operate.

James Washington, Duncan facilities manager, said the barbecue was part of a contingency plan Duncan officials had in place in case the indoor dining facility experienced problems.

"We always have a backup plan, so we had the paper products (plates and cups) already here," Washington said. "I think everyone enjoyed it."

Washington's observation was confirmed by several cadets, who took the opportunity of a

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Motorcycle traffic officer **Calder Lively** of the College Station Police Department directs cars at the intersection of George Bush Drive and Texas Avenue. Traffic lights failed due to power outages in Bryan, College Station and Snook.

## U.S., Iraq look to form new government

By Nicole Winfield  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CAMP AS SAYLIYAH, Qatar — With the worst of the fighting over, U.S.-picked representatives of some of Iraq's often-quarrelsome factions were brought together Tuesday in the ancient city of Ur to begin shaping the country's postwar government.

The meeting in Ur, the Biblical birthplace of the prophet Abraham, included Kurds, Sunni and Shiite Muslims from inside the country as well as others who have spent many years in exile.

But many Iraqis said that they would boycott the meeting and that they opposed U.S. plans to install retired

Gen. Jay Garner as head of an interim administration.

"Iraq needs an Iraqi interim government. Anything other than this tramples the rights of the Iraqi people and will be a return to the era of colonization," said Abdul Aziz Hakim, a leader of the largest Iraqi Shiite group, the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq.

U.S. officials hope to see more Iraqis join the process over time.

"It's critical that the world understand that this is only the fledgling first meeting of what will hopefully be a much larger series of meetings across Iraq," said Jim Wilkinson, spokesman at U.S. Central Command.

A national conference is planned ultimately to select the interim administration, perhaps within weeks, said a

senior U.S. government official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The U.S.-led interim administration could begin handing power back to Iraqi officials within three to six months, but forming a government will take longer, said Maj. Gen. Tim Cross, the top British member of Garner's team.

"Will we get a complete government in place in that time? I doubt it," Cross said. "One has to go through the process of building from the bottom up, allowing the leadership to establish itself, and then the election process to go through and so forth. That full electoral process may well take longer."

Garner's Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance is charged with coordinating humanitarian assistance, rebuilding infrastructure

shattered by years of war and sanctions, and gradually handing back power to Iraqis leading a democratically elected government.

About 100 Iraqis were expected at Tuesday's meeting, half from inside Iraq, half exiles. The moderator was to be Zalmay Khalilzad, the White House envoy to Iraq. Garner was also expected, along with representatives from Britain, Australia and Poland — countries that contributed forces to the coalition.

Wilkinson stressed that the meeting was an "unscripted, free-flowing forum of ideas" designed to get Iraqis talking about what they want for the future.

There are already tensions between the United States and some of the Iraqi political factions.

### Rebuilding Iraq

Jay Garner, 64, is the Director of the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance for Post-war Iraq.

**Education** Bachelor's degree, history, Florida State University, 1962; masters degree, public administration, Shippensburg University

#### Military experience overview

- ▶ Entered Army in 1962, served two tours in Vietnam
- ▶ Commanded various air defenses in United States and Europe, 1984-1992
- ▶ Commanding general, Joint Task Force Bravo in Iraq, 1991
- ▶ Assistant vice chief of staff for the Army, 1996-97

SOURCE: Associated Press AP

## Bonfire memorial forum to be held in MSC today

An open forum will be held today with Overland Partners Inc., the designers of the Bonfire Memorial, in Memorial Student Center 292B from 12:30-1:30 p.m.

The public will be able to see the progress made on the memorial and ask questions.

Overland Partners will present a multi-media presentation that describes the memorial, its significance and the construction process, said Martha Raney of the Bonfire Memorial Office.

This is part of a campus visit by Overland Partners at the 50 percent completion stage of the design process, Raney said.

Since February, the San Antonio-based design firm has met with each of the families of the 12 who were killed in the 1999 Aggie Bonfire Collapse, to develop the 12 unique bronze portals and pay tribute to the fallen Aggies.

Each portal will face the hometown of each of the victims and contain a portrait sculpted in bronze along with text describing each individual, Raney said.

Construction will begin this summer and is expected to be completed by fall 2004.

A dedication ceremony is planned for Nov. 18, 2004, the fifth anniversary of the collapse.

## Football prices highest in Big 12

By Marcus White  
THE BATTALION

Aggie fans will be digging deeper than ever before to watch the Texas A&M football team play next season.

The A&M Athletic Department announced Friday that the non-student basic season ticket package price will increase from \$265 to \$375 for 2003. Students will pay \$187, \$55 more than the 2002 season. The new rates are now the highest in the Big 12 conference.

A&M Athletic Director Bill Byrne said the decision to raise ticket prices by 41 percent was made to help A&M secure a place in college football's upper echelon.

"The strongest reason behind upgrading the value of Aggie football is to support our own vision, our ambition and our goals," Byrne said. "We want to fill our trophy case with Big 12 and NCAA championships."

All Kyle Field tickets will see an

increase in price, including the annual Thanksgiving day game between A&M and the University of Texas. Fans will pay \$75 to watch the storied match up, the same price the Big 12 charged fans to watch Texas and Oklahoma play at the Cotton Bowl in Dallas.

"The reason a ticket to watch the Aggies play Texas costs \$75 is because it is the ultimate experience in Aggie football. It's the premiere Aggie athletic and entertainment event of the year," Byrne said. "The Red River Shootout between Texas and Oklahoma costs \$75, and the Aggies v. the Longhorns is unquestionably in the same class."

Raising ticket prices is not a new practice for Byrne. While serving as the athletic director for the University of Nebraska, Huskers fans saw an increase in ticket prices for five consecutive years. The Daily Nebraskan, the student newspaper at the University of Nebraska, even coined the nickname "Dollar Bill" because of what they called his prioritization of making

money. Nebraska recently lowered next year's season ticket package.

Reputation aside, Byrne said Aggie football needs increased support to build prominence among the top collegiate football programs in the nation.

"Rather than comparing ourselves to someone else, we want the intercollegiate athletic world comparing itself to us. We want to see beads of sweat break out on every forehead in the Big 12 because of what we're doing," Byrne said. "Teams across America need to know that when you play the Aggies in any sport, you'd better tape your ankles."

Student reaction to the price increase has been mixed. Some students, such as junior psychology major Don Myers, said too many funds are already contributed to A&M's football program.

"The football team gets so much money in the first place," Myers said. "Departments like journalism are being

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