

Friday, March 26, 2004

NEWS IN BRIEF

Flame to burn at Athens Games lit in birthplace of Olympics

ANCIENT OLYMPIA, Greece (AP) — The flame that will burn at the Athens Games was lit Thursday amid the ruins of the ancient sanctuary where the Olympics were born 2,780 years ago.

In a ceremony held at an altar to Hera, a Greek goddess worshipped in Olympia during the original games, the torch was lit by a Greek actress playing the role of a high priestess. Thalia Prokopiou, one of two dozen women that took part in the ceremony, placed a silver torch inside a burnished-steel concave mirror. The sun's rays then ignited the torch.

"Today the Olympic flame will be reborn yet again to enfold the whole world in its light. This is the day that all of us have been waiting for so eagerly," said Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki, president of the Athens organizing committee.

During the ceremony, Prokopiou intoned a prayer to the ancient Greek god Apollo for the sun to shine.

"Apollo god of the sun and the idea of light send your rays and light the sacred torch for the hospitable city of Athens," she said.

Security forces clash with demonstrators as Ivory Coast protest begins

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast (AP) — Security forces killed 11 demonstrators in Ivory Coast on Thursday as a massive march to demand implementation of a peace deal got underway in the tank-guarded commercial capital, an opposition spokesman said.

The protesters were killed in different parts of the West African city as security forces tried to disperse crowds, said Bacongo Cisse, a spokesman for the main opposition Rally of the Republicans party. The government had no immediate comment.

"The demonstration will continue. We will do everything to arrive in Plateau," Cisse said, referring to the march's destination — the downtown business district that is home to the presidential palace and key ministries.

Cisse said two of dead were shot Thursday by a helicopter gunship in the southern Port Bouet neighborhood.

The march was called to press President Laurent Gbagbo to fully implement a 2003 peace deal and would be the first large-scale protest against the government since the end of a nine-month civil war last year.

U.S. soldier killed amid warnings that attacks will increase in run-up to transfer of power

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) — Insurgents attacked a patrol north of Baghdad, sparking a gunbattle that killed a U.S. soldier and three rebels on Wednesday amid warnings that attacks will likely increase with fewer than 100 days left before the coalition hands over sovereignty.

A U.S. soldier also was wounded in the fighting Wednesday near the town of Taji, just north of the capital, said Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt, the U.S. military's deputy director of operations. He gave no other details.

On Tuesday, guerrillas attacked a patrol in the town of Hamam al-Alil, 210 miles north of Baghdad, wounding a U.S. soldier, Kimmitt said. Troops returned fire and killed one of the attackers.

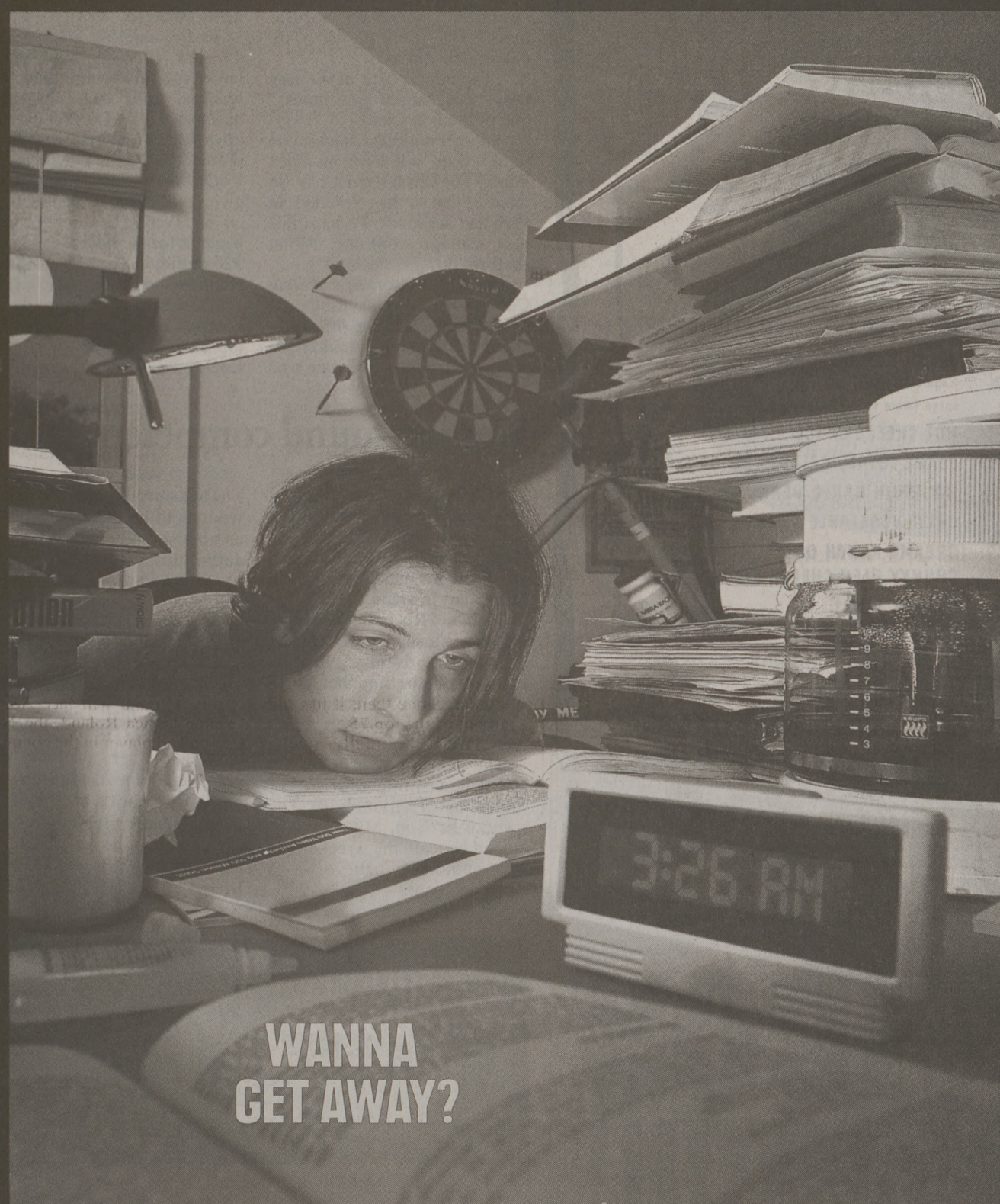
With fewer than 100 days until U.S.-led occupiers transfer power to Iraqis on June 30, U.S. and Iraqi officials expect Iraqi guerrillas and foreign fighters to step up attacks in an attempt to disrupt the handover process and try to demonstrate that a fledgling Iraqi government cannot control the country.

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