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Hostage crisis in Iraq escalates

By Mariam Fam THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The use of BAGHDAD, Iraq — A team fkidnappers grabbed two 1 work toge mericans and a Briton in a dawn that will and on their home on a leafy ghdad street Thursday — a

bold abduction that underlines the increasing danger for foreigners in the embattled capital as violence soars ahead of national elections d suicidal (planned for early next year.

The three worked for Gulf Serices Co., a United Arab Emirdictability, ates-based construction company. They were doing work under ontracts with them in Baghdad." aid State Department spokesman tional dram Richard Boucher.

At least five other Westerners are being held hostage in Iraq, cluding an Iraq-American man, wo female Italian aid workers and two French reporters, both of shom have dark hair.

Insurgents have turned to kidappings and spectacular bombcally a well-ings as the weapon of choice to ressure the United States and is allies to pull out of Iraq and mbarrass the interim government of Prime Minister Ayad Alwi. Even in the heavily guarded Green Zone — where the U.S. Embassy is located — foreigners ere warned in the last 10 days to on guard against possible kidpping attempts, said a U.S. ofal on condition of anonymity. More than 100 foreigners id to collect lucrative ransoms.

ating a seige-like mentality among the dwindling international community

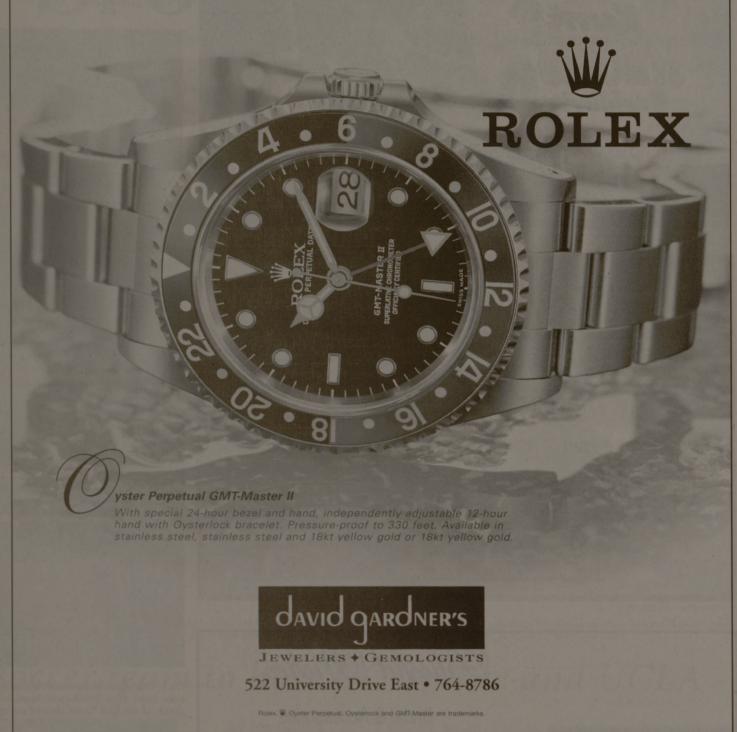
Iraqi interim President Ghazi al-Yawer, on a visit to The Hague, Netherlands, insisted that security was Iraq's priority and that it was "a little bit too prema-ture to decide" whether elections would be held as planned.

By trying to scare away foreign workers, the kidnappers could be further stall reconstruction projects by driving away those who coordinate and run programs. Other kidnapping victims have been blue-collar workers, driving trucks, rebuilding electrical plants and guarding building sites.

Many members of the be have hired armed guards and built blast walls around their compounds to ward against the some companies - whose work are pulling out after concluding the risks are too great.

Anthony Cordesman, a military analyst with the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washing kidnappings - has hurt plans to revive the country's economy.

"There is no question that mix of attacks, kidnappings, bombings, etc, has had a major effect of blocking foreign investment, leading firms to drop out of aid projects, restricting activity to 'safe' or 'safer' areas and disruptave been kidnapped, some in a ing any smooth flow of activity while forcing massive expendi-



please your to Airport security increases

lany have been executed, cre-

By Leslie Miller THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Starting xt week, all airline passengers just take off their jackets before ssing through metal detectors, more will be subjected to t-down searches and checks r explosives, the Transportaon Security Administration anunced Thursday.

Screeners will advise passeners of the new procedures when ey put their carry-on bags on e conveyor belt, TSA spokesman Yolanda Clark said.

The goal is "to fortify our reening procedures to detect e presence of explosives cared on a person or in carry-on

Bags checked onto planes ust pass through machines nat can detect various kinds of xplosives.

But neither the walk-through tetal detectors that passengers se on the way to gates nor the -ray machines for carry-on bags

in sense plastic explosives. Now, every passenger selected r secondary screening after ssing through metal detectors ill have their carry-on items bjected to checks by explo-

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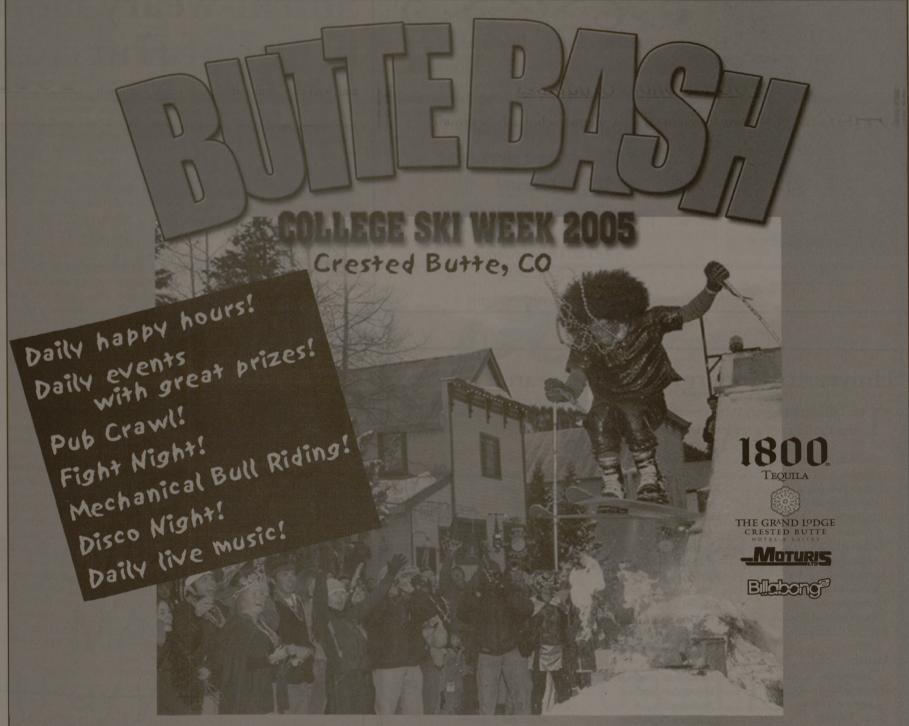
ves trace detectors. Screeners also have more scretion to conduct pat-down arches and check carry-on ags for bombs.

Air Travelers Association resident David Stempler said ne changes are a good idea, lough some passengers could e upset by hand searches.

"Given the extraordinary need or it — given the recent bombing fthe planes in Russia, heightened ecurity alerts, tension leading up o the election — I think these are necessary evils that passengers lave to put up with," he said.

Two Chechen woman are susected of carrying bombs onto two Russian planes that exploded almost simultaneously last month.

The Sept. 11 commission ecommended in its final report hat the TSA make it a high priprity to improve the ability to letect explosives on passengers t security checkpoints.



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