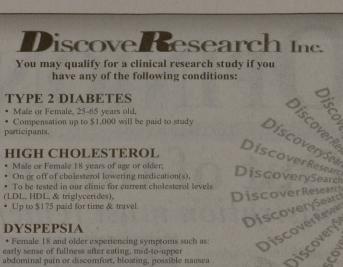
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Wednesday, September 29, 2004

THE BATTALIO

ALISON COZBY - THE B

Senior wildlife and fisheries sciences major **Mike Fry** speaks with senior architecture student **Nick Sirianni** at the Texas A&M Off-Road club display at Rudder Fountain Tuesday afternoon. The du members were out to promote membership and emphasize that it is not necessary to have an off-road vehicle to join.

Seven hostages released, 18 are still held captive

By Alexandra Zavis THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kidnappers released two female Italian aid workers and five other hostages Tuesday, raising hopes for at least 18 foreigners still in captivity. But insurgents showed no sign of easing their blood-soaked campaign against the U.S. presence in Iraq, staging a show of defiance in Samarra and striking twice with deadly force in Basra.

It was unclear what prompted the two separate groups of kidnappers to release the Italians, three Egyptians and two Iraqis, and whether any ransom had been paid. It was the second day in a row that foreigners were freed.

The Italian women were wearing full black veils that revealed only their eyes as they were received by the Italian Red Cross in a Baghdad neighborhood, according to video broadcast by the Arab news station Al-Jazeera.

Looking dazed but smiling, Simona Torretta lifted her veil and repeated, "Thank you," in Arabic. Simona Pari hesitated before also lifting her veil.

Later Tuesday, the two women were flown home aboard a Falcon 20 plane, arriving at a military airport in Rome shortly after p.m. The two, now in long, we dresses, emerged smiling and hands as they walked on the mac, their relatives by their say Asked by reporters how a

felt, Pari just said, "Good." Pari and Torretta were abdue Sept. 7 in a bold raid on the Bab

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dad office of their aid ageny⁵. Ponte Per ..." ("A Bridge To -Two Iraqis, Raad Ali Aziz = Mahnaz Bassam, were also seiz they too were released Tuesday

News of the release came after Muslim leader from Italy met we an influential Muslim associate in Baghdad on Tuesday to pre for their freedom, though it was immediately known if there was connection. The two women, bit 29, had been working on schw and water projects in Iraq.

The Kuwaiti newspaper Al-k al-Aam had reported Tuesday they could be released by Friday return for a \$1 million ransom. B Al-Arabiya TV, citing unidentifi sources involved in the new tions, said no ransom was paid Pope John Paul II, who rece

ly urged that all hostages held Iraq be freed, expressed "gr joy" over the release of the Italii aid workers, the Vatican said.

UNIVERSITY

