

Nation & World

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[PERSON IN THE NEWS]

RELEASED REPORTER OFTEN FEARED HE WOULD BE KILLED



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Alan Johnston speaks at a news conference Wednesday.

JERUSALEM — The first night after he was snatched in Gaza nearly four months ago, BBC reporter Alan Johnston feared he was about to die. The kidnapers' masked leader appeared in the doorway, and the prisoner was handcuffed, hooded and taken outside.

But the Palestinian gunmen were just moving him to another hideout, and Johnston settled into a grim captivity — like "being buried alive" — much of which he spent in a dark room, often watched over by a guard who rarely spoke. Until his release early Wednesday in a murky deal between his kidnapers and Gaza's Hamas rulers, Johnston

said he had only one link to the world — a radio that picked up British Broadcasting Corp. reports on the frantic efforts to free its correspondent.

Johnston, who emerged gaunt but smiling, told the BBC he often had been unsure if he was going to live or die and thanked those who worked for his release.

Johnston, a native of Scotland who reported from Gaza for the BBC for three years, was grabbed on a Gaza City street by masked gunmen March 12, shoved into a car and spirited away. He was the latest in a string of foreigners kidnapped in Gaza, and his time in captivity was by far the longest.

[IN THE NATION]

MARINES UNDER INVESTIGATION — CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. — U.S. Naval Criminal Investigative Service agents are investigating allegations that a Marine company based here killed as many as eight unarmed Iraqi prisoners of war during the battle of Fallujah in November 2004, according to civilian and military sources.

RAIN-SWOLLEN WATERWAYS CRESTING — OKLAHOMA CITY — Flooding slowly subsided Wednesday in northeastern Oklahoma but meteorologists predicted more problems because lakes and reservoirs were already filled to capacity. Some 42,000 gallons of oil spilled during a flash flood in Coffeyville, Kan., had mostly dissipated, but more rain fell on hard-hit Texas.

[IN THE WORLD]

HAMAS CLAIMS RELEASE STARTS 'NEW ERA' — GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — Hamas said Wednesday the release of BBC reporter Alan Johnston ushers in a "new era" of law and order in Gaza, and warned it will go after vigilante gunmen. But the Islamic militant group's attempt to portray itself as a responsible ruler of the territory it seized by force last month was undermined by the kidnapers, who bragged they would never surrender their weapons. Hamas is trying to make the case that it could govern better than the ousted Fatah movement.

NEXT CHINESE EXPORT: CARS — BEIJING — Chrysler Group signed a deal Wednesday with China's biggest automaker, Chery, to launch a low-cost production venture that could export the first Chinese-made cars to the U.S. The first cars should reach Latin America or Eastern Europe within a year, and North America and Western Europe in 2½ years, said Chrysler CEO Tom LaSorda.

thestate.com

AS FAMILIES STILL WAIT: A SEARCH FOR SOLDIERS' REMAINS



RON EDMONDS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sunrise at the Iwo Jima Memorial in Washington on Tuesday.

IWO JIMA, Japan — Maj. Sean Stinchon stands at the base of Hill 362A and scans a map drawn up by Navy Seabees in 1948. It shows a labyrinth of caves and tunnels that runs through the brush-covered hill.

Stinchon can see all the way to the black-sand beach and the Pacific. It's a breathtaking scene.

But Stinchon, of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command at Hickam Air Force Base on Hawaii, is

focused on finding a man named Sgt. William H. Genaust, killed 62 years ago.

For two years, he has traveled through Europe and Asia looking for the remains of America's fallen troops. More than 78,000 are still missing from World War II alone. Another 8,100 are MIA from the Korean conflict, and 1,750 from Vietnam.

For more, go to thestate.com and click News, then Nation (Editor's Pick).

LET FREEDOM RING

U.S. shows appetite for victory

Red, white and blue reclaims hot-dog eating title as Calif. man downs 66 in 12 minutes

By LARRY McSHANE
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — In a gut-busting showdown that combined drama, daring and indigestion, Joey Chestnut emerged Wednesday as the world's hot-dog eating champion, knocking off six-time winner

Takeru Kobayashi in a record-setting yet repulsive triumph.

Chestnut, the great red, white and blue hope in the annual Fourth of July competition, broke his own world record by inhaling 66 hot dogs in 12 minutes — a staggering one every 10.9 seconds — before a screaming crowd in

Coney Island.

"If I needed to eat another one right now, I could," the 23-year-old Californian said after receiving the mustard-yellow belt emblematic of hot-dog eating supremacy.

Kobayashi, the Japanese eating machine, recently had a wisdom tooth extracted and received chiropractic treatment for a sore jaw. But he stayed with Chestnut until the very end of the 12-minute competition.

Once the contest ended, the runner-up suffered a reversal — competitive-eating jargon for vomiting — leading to a deduction from his final total. Kobayashi finished with 63 HDBs (hot dogs and buns eaten).

Kobayashi's previous best was 53½ in the competition that dates back to 1916. The all-time record before Wednesday's contest was Chestnut's 59½, set last month in Tempe, Ariz.



SETH WENIG/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Takeru Kobayashi, left, and Joey Chestnut gobble down hot dogs Wednesday during the annual Fourth of July competition in New York. Chestnut knocked off six-time winner Kobayashi by eating a record 66 franks.

Politicians on parade during holiday in Iowa

By AMY LORENTZEN
The Associated Press

CLEAR LAKE, Iowa — Fourth of July virtually everywhere is about fireworks, flags, firetrucks and floats. In Iowa Wednesday, people eyeing the White House also were in the mix.

Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton walked hand in hand with her husband, Bill, in a postcard-perfect

holiday parade.

Veterans led Wednesday's parade, which included a float featuring a woman dressed as a gold Statue of Liberty. On what they hope will be a stroll back into the White House, the Clintons followed close behind.

Former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, a Republican candidate, marched farther back. Romney was joined by his son Josh, who is traveling to every county in the state.

There was a float in the parade for Rep. Tom Tancredo, R-Colo., who also is seeking the GOP presidential nod. It was towed by a red truck and featured a large array of American flags.

Meanwhile, Sen. Barack Obama, who also was campaigning in Iowa, said he thinks Americans want fresh ideas in the current race for the White House.

"I admire Bill Clinton. I think

he did a lot of fine things as president, and he's a terrific political strategist," the Illinois senator told The Associated Press.

"What we're more interested in is looking forward, not in looking backward. I think the American people feel the same way. What they are looking for is a way to break out of the harsh partisanship and the old arguments — and to solve problems."

Hundreds of troops enlist for another stint

161 soldiers become U.S. citizens in ceremonies at Camp Victory

By ROBERT H. REID
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Hundreds of U.S. troops marked the Fourth of July by re-enlisting Wednesday, while others took oaths of American citizenship in ceremonies at the main U.S. headquarters in Iraq.

A total of 588 troops signed up for another stint, according to a U.S. military statement, while 161 soldiers became naturalized American citizens. The ceremonies took place at Camp Victory, the sprawling American headquarters at the western end of the Iraqi capital.

"No bonus, no matter the size, can adequately compensate you for the contribution each of you has made and continues to make

as a custodian of our nation's defenses," the top U.S. commander, Gen. David Petraeus, told the audience.

Visiting Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., congratulated the new citizens and spoke of the hardships endured fighting in an unpopular war. McCain, who has backed the war, has watched his presidential campaign suffer as public support for the conflict has waned.

"As you know, the war in which you have fought has divided the American people," McCain said. "But it has divided no American in their admiration for you. We all honor you."

Petraeus dedicated the Independence Day ceremony to the memory of two soldiers — New Yorkers native to Jamaica and Morocco — who were killed in action before they could be sworn in as citizens.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., led the new citizens in the Pledge of Allegiance.

"I'm glad that I can be here to



ALI AL-SAAD/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Newly naturalized U.S. soldiers take part in a ceremony Wednesday at Camp Victory in Baghdad. They were among 161 soldiers who became U.S. citizens.

get my citizenship," said Pfc. Yaremi Boza, a Cuban-born human resources specialist with the 260th Military Intelligence Battalion. "It means being able to take care of myself and my family and having lots of opportunities and windows open."

For many of the more than 155,000 troops, it was business as usual — patrolling, convoy duties and guarding key facilities. At least two Americans were killed

Wednesday — one in a helicopter crash north of Baghdad and another during combat operations south of the capital.

Spc. James Jewett, 36, from Long Beach, Calif., spent his day hauling cargo containers and thinking about home.

"I'd be barbecuing with my daughter and my mom back in Long Beach," he said. "Being over here teaches you to appreciate the small things that America has to offer."

[WATCH FOR ...]

BUSH: VICTORY DEMANDS MORE PATIENCE, COURAGE, SACRIFICE

MARTINSBURG, W.Va. — President Bush gave an Independence Day pep talk to West Virginia Air National Guard members and their families Wednesday, telling them victory in Iraq "will require more patience, more courage and more sacrifice." Bush told a crowd gathered in a maintenance hangar: "If we were to quit Iraq before the job is done, the terrorists we are fighting would not declare victory and lay down their arms. They would follow us here, home."



CAROLYN KASTER/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

President Bush poses with a Guard volunteer.

[PATRIOTISM]

'AND I'LL HAVE A STAR-SPANGLED SIDE OF HASH BROWNS WITH THAT'

CHARLES TOWN, W.Va. — Customers at the Liberty Street Carryout don't sing for their supper. They sing for their country. Every day at noon, customers join waitress Judy Hawkins in a sing-along with a local radio station's broadcast of "The Star-Spangled Banner." Hawkins said she started singing the national anthem several months ago and now it's a daily ritual. "The public enjoys it. They stop eating and join in," she said. It's fun, but "We take 'The Star-Spangled Banner' very seriously."