

Rare results

Could baby screening expand? **Health/C1**



Back breaker

Kobe's late basket beats Mavs **Sports/D1**



Is it history?

Landmark status sought for Mattei's Tavern **Local/B1**

VAFB eyes education center

Vice commander addresses SM, Lompoc business leaders

By **JANENE SCULLY**
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A new education facility is among the top military construction needs at Vandenberg Air Force Base, a group of business leaders from Lompoc and Santa Maria was told Wednesday.

Col. Steven Winters, 30th Space Wing vice commander, said the \$18.7 million project could be completed as soon as 2015, according to military construction priorities and project.

The 55,000-square-foot Education Center would put Vandenberg's various education programs, including the First Term Airmen Center, and colleges that offer classes on base, under one roof.

The current facility is "pretty old, definitely in need of a total makeover," Winters added.

Education is extremely important to Air Force members, he noted.

"Whether they continue a career in the military or afterwards, education is a linchpin to

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VAFB by the numbers

- 3,474 military members
- 849 civilian workers
- 3,149 contractor employees
- 998 homes
- 42 miles of coastline
- 3-mile-long runway
- Nearly 100,000 acres
- Third-largest Air Force base
- 2,500 archeological/historical sites
- 15 endangered/threatened species



Bryan Walton/Staff

A surfer takes advantage of the big waves, brought about by a winter storm, next to the Pismo Pier. Weather forecasters say the Central Coast will have "very active weather for the next seven days."

Storm brings big local waves

Flood, high-surf warnings issued along Central Coast

By **MARK BROWN**
STAFF WRITER

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Towering swells cresting and breaking into the Pismo Pier Wednesday warned away surfers and left families admiring the power of Mother Nature from well back on the beach.

See the video about big waves on the coast at santamariatimes.com

The National Weather Service issued flood and high-surf warnings through early today. Swells up to 25 feet rolled into beaches along San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties Wednesday, and brought flooding to some low-lying coastal areas.

Forecasters said they expected dangerous surf conditions along the Central Coast through at least midday Friday.

INSIDE

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Arroyo Grande resident Steve Clark stopped by Pismo Wednesday afternoon with his friends for some bodyboarding, only to have the tumultuous seas cut their day short.

"I expected it to be a lot better than it was," said Clark, who for awhile had the waves all to himself. "It's pretty bad out there."

One longtime area business owner said the waves reminded him of the storms that brought down Pismo Pier in the early '80s.

"You've got to be careful out there," said Bill Bookout, owner of Pismo Beach Surf Shop. "As quick as the water is coming in, it's going out. You'd really need to be a professional, hard-core surfer to handle the conditions."

The National Weather Service predicted that beach-battering surf will diminish

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AFGHANISTAN

U.N.: Taliban cause civilian deaths to soar

Casualties attributed to U.S.-led forces drop 30 percent

By **KIM GAMEL**
ASSOCIATED PRESS

KABUL — Taliban suicide bombings and other attacks caused Afghan civilian deaths to soar last year to the highest annual level of the war, a U.N. report found Wednesday, while deaths attributed to allied troops dropped nearly 30 percent. Many Afghans now blame the violence on the Taliban rather than foreign forces.

A decline in NATO killings of civilians has become a key U.S. goal for winning over the Afghan people. Public outrage over rising death tolls prompted the top commander Gen. Stanley McChrystal last year to tighten the rules on the use of airstrikes and other weaponry if civilians are at risk.

The United Nations said 2,412 civilians were killed in 2009 — a 14-percent increase over the 2,118 who died in 2008. Nearly 70 percent of civilian deaths last year, or 1,630, were caused by the insurgents, the report found.

NATO and allied Afghan forces were responsible for 25 percent of the deaths, or 596, the U.N. said, down from 39 percent, or 828, in 2008.

The remainder could not be attributed to either side: civilians caught in the crossfire or killed by unexploded ordnance, according to the report.

More than half the civilian deaths were a result of suicide attacks and other bombings as well as assassinations and executions — despite an order last year by Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar to avoid endangering noncombatants. The U.N. said Taliban attacks were mainly aimed at government or international forces but civilians can stumble into ambushes or be too close to a suicide bombing.

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Associated Press

Karim Applon, 7, sits on his aunt's lap Wednesday while waiting to be evacuated for medical treatment in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Tuesday's earthquake left a landscape of collapsed buildings, hospitals, schools, churches, homes, even the gleaming national palace.

Haiti quake: Thousands feared dead, many trapped

By **JONATHAN M. KATZ**
ASSOCIATED PRESS

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Dazed survivors wandered past dead bodies in rubble-strewn streets Wednesday, crying for loved ones, and rescuers desperately searched collapsed buildings as fear rose that the death toll from Haiti's devastating earthquake could reach into the tens of thousands.

The first cargo planes with food, water, medical supplies, shelter and sniffer dogs headed to the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation a day after the magnitude-7 quake flattened

much of the capital of 2 million people.

Tuesday's earthquake brought down buildings great and small — from shacks in shantytowns to President Rene Preval's gleaming white National Palace, where a dome tilted ominously above the manicured grounds.

Hospitals, schools and the main prison collapsed. The capital's Roman Catholic archbishop was killed when his office and the main cathedral fell. The head of the U.N. peacekeeping mission was missing in the ruins of the organization's multi-story headquarters.

Police officers turned

their pickup trucks into ambulances to carry the injured. Wisnel Occilus, a 24-year-old student, was wedged between two other survivors in a truck bed headed to a police station. He was in an English class when the earth shook at 4:53 p.m. and the building collapsed.

"The professor is dead. Some of the students are dead, too," said Occilus, who suspected he had several broken bones. "Everything hurts."

Other survivors carried injured to hospitals in wheelbarrows and on stretchers

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Gov. files appeal in furlough case

Move latest salvo in prison guard dispute

By **DON THOMPSON**
ASSOCIATED PRESS

SACRAMENTO — The Schwarzenegger administration filed an appeal Wednesday in a lawsuit over his furloughs of state workers, contesting a decision by the controller to restore pay for prison guards.

Last year, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger ordered some 200,000 state employees to take three days off a month without pay, cutting their paychecks by 14 percent to help close the state's budget gap. The California Correctional Peace Officers Association sued, arguing that guards are losing three days' pay each month, but can never take the time off because prisons operate around the clock.

Alameda County Superior Court Judge Frank Roesch sided with the 30,000-member union last month. On Tuesday, state Controller John Chiang said he intends to restore guards' full pay to comply with that ruling. The guards' court victory does not affect about two dozen other union lawsuits opposing the furloughs.

Schwarzenegger spokesman Aaron McLearn said the administration will impose layoffs and end guards' extra pay and pension benefits if an appeals court doesn't quickly block the

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WEATHER
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