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PREP FOOTBALL WEEK 1

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Lawndale soldier dies in attack

AFGHANISTAN: Leuzinger grad also did a tour in Iraq before latest assignment.

By Larry Altman Staff Writer

An Army soldier from Lawndale was killed in Kandahar, Afghanistan, when enemy forces attacked his unit with an improvised explosive device, government officials announced Friday.

Koran Pulido Contreras, 21, died

Thursday while fighting with the 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, based in Fort Drum, N.Y.

"I am waiting for the body right now," Contreras' mother, Lilia Contreras, said Friday evening from Philadelphia, not far from where fallen soldiers are returned to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware.

The casket carrying the infantryman was expected to arrive about 8:30 p.m. Eastern time. Contreras and her hus-

band, Marco, were there to meet it.

"He had friends everywhere," his mother said. "Now I miss him. I am so upset."

Contreras grew up in Lawndale, but spent a year in high school in Mexico before graduating from Leuzinger High School in 2007.

He worked as a server at Cafe Boogaloo and as a cook at Shark's Cove in Hermosa Beach before deciding to join the Army, his mother said.

"He loved Hermosa Beach. He had a

lot of friends," she said. "He liked skateboarding and the beach."

While serving in the military, Contreras spent a year in Iraq. He returned home, but was soon assigned to Afghanistan.

"I worried all the time," his mother said. "He is my son."

Contreras often wrote to and called his mother, telling her about his job and sometimes talking about what

SOLDIER A16



Koran Pulido Contreras, 21, liked Afghanistan because it was greener than Iraq.

SOUTH BAY. TEACHING ABOUT 9-11



Brad Graverson Staff Photographer

A line of trumpeters from the Manhattan Beach Middle School band plays taps during a 9-11 memorial ceremony Friday. Schools struggle to find appropriate lesson plans to teach students about the 2001 attacks and their aftermath.

Lessons on tragedy a challenge

EDUCATION: Many schools have few or no guidelines on how to cover the subject.

By Rob Kuznia and Melissa Pamer Staff Writers

Every year, social studies teacher Jed Rucker of Manhattan Beach Middle School makes a point to address the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, but he tries to avoid delving too deeply into the politically charged areas.

When students ask questions about some of those hot-button topics — weapons of mass destruction, religion, the wars in Iraq and Afghani-

CLASS A12



Seventh-grader Kelly Sidney shows her colors on Patriotism Day at Manhattan Beach Middle School on Friday.

More inside

- L.A. mayor leads City Hall ceremony honoring 9-11 victims and heroes. A3
- Firefighters cycle across

the country to mark the events of 9-11. A3

On the Web

- For a schedule of 9-11 events, visit dailybreeze.com

Interfaith group met 9-11 challenge

SOUTH BAY: Terrorist attack forced many Muslims to reach out and explain their faith.

By Melissa Evans Staff Writer

When she saw news of the 9-11 attacks blaring from the television in her kitchen, Elena Meloni was horrified, saddened and angry.

One other thought crossed her mind: "I

hope it was no one from our community," the Hawthorne resident said, "because how could someone do this? Who would do something like this?"

Soon enough, however, it was reported that the attacks were orchestrated by al-Qaida, an Islamic terrorist group. She was sickened.

And, like many Muslim mothers, she became worried about her children at school, whether they would be teased, bul-

lied or questioned about their faith.

"I told them to be calm, be rational," she said. "I told them to be models of peace."

For Muslims locally and nationally, tensions were high in the days, weeks and months that followed the attacks.

Many say they had been used to keeping a low profile, focusing on work, school and family. Suddenly, they were thrust into the spotlight, speaking for a religion under

INTERFAITH A12

Stadium project gets lift

LOS ANGELES: State Senate OKs bill to fast-track legal challenges.

By Dakota Smith Staff Writer

The state Senate approved special legislation Friday designed to expedite construction of a football stadium in downtown Los Angeles, saying it was willing to bend California's environment laws in order to generate thousands of jobs.

SB 292 fast-tracks legal challenges to construction of the 72,000-seat Farmers Field stadium. Approved by the Assembly on Wednesday and passed 32-7 on Friday afternoon, the bill now heads to Gov. Jerry Brown for consideration. He has not indicated whether he

will sign it.

"The sheer scale and magnitude (of the project) will be felt statewide from an economic point of view," said Sen. Alex Padilla, D-Van Nuys, who sponsored the bill. "We will feel that bump throughout the state."

Anschutz Entertainment Group said its \$1.3 billion project would generate as much as \$40 million in tax revenue annually for the state and city of Los Angeles.

The developer plans to raze the West Hall of the Los Angeles Convention Center, and use the site for its state-of-the-art stadium. AEG would rebuild the Convention Center hall nearby, along with a parking garage.

AEG estimates it will

AEG A6

Outage a reminder of vulnerabilities

ELECTRICITY: Grid remains at risk of widespread failures.

By Michael R. Blood and Elliot Spagat The Associated Press

A blackout that swept across parts of the Southwest and Mexico apparently began with a single utility worker and a minor repair job.

How it then rippled from that worker in the Arizona desert, to Southern California and across the border, plunging millions of people into darkness, has authorities and experts puzzled, especially since the power grid is built to withstand such mishaps.

However it spread, Thursday's outage was a reminder that the nation's transmission lines remain all too vulnerable to cascading power failures.

"There are a lot of critical pieces of equipment on the system and we have less defense than we think," said Rich Sedano at the Regulatory Assistance Project, a utility industry think tank

Some are prepared, some not

By Gillian Flaccus and Julie Watson The Associated Press

Steve Tustison faced a parenting headache that called for serious improvisation: Stuck in traffic during a massive blackout with his three sons, he was penniless, light was fading and the boys were hungry.

The 47-year-old father finally convinced the owner of a nearby liquor store to have pity on them and hand over a tin of Spam and a box of Ritz crackers so they could eat dinner. He supplemented it with canned olives and pickles stowed

PREPARED A16

OUTAGE A16

INSIDE

Ask Us Business A5 A13

Classifieds Comics Crosswords Faith C4, C9, D3 A15

C2 D3-4 Lottery Nation/World Obituaries C4, C9, D3 A15

Horoscope Lottery Sudoku A2 A8 A6

Police Log Ship Arrivals D3 Television A7 C9 D3 D5

