

Showers
High 70, low 32
Complete weather, 8B

April 15, 2003

Women weighing safety at academy

Prospective cadets visit amid scandal

By Elizabeth Aguilera
Denver Post Staff Writer

AIR FORCE ACADEMY — Ashley Snyder said she has faith that the Air Force Academy will be a safe place when she attends starting this summer.

Still, after the highly publicized sexual-assault scandal, the 18-year-old from Ohio said she plans to be more careful, to buddy up when she goes out at night and to try not to give guys the wrong signals.

"At first it scared me and surprised me to hear what was going on," Snyder said. "I started looking at the Naval Academy but decided it's going to happen anyway there or at civilian colleges, too."

More than 250 prospective cadets who have been offered appointments at the academy were on campus Monday for a two-day orientation that included briefings about cadet life and sexual harassment. They will spend about 24 hours with cadets attending classes, sharing meals and living in the dorms.

"We don't know what to expect," said Snyder's mother, Mary. "But with all the attention it's received, our feeling is that next year will be the best year to be here because of all the changes and scrutiny."

Since the scandal erupted earlier this year, it has triggered congressional hearings, inspector-general investigations and the ouster last month of four top academy commanders. Two new commanders arrived last week.

As part of the overhaul, policy shifts contained in Air Force Secretary James Roche's "Agenda for Change" also include clustering women's dorm rooms around women's bathroom facilities rather than sprinkling them throughout the dorms, night and weekend security patrols, and more resources for women who come forward and report assaults.

Female cadets who report an assault also would be free from prosecution or discipline for lesser offenses, such as drinking on campus.

Monday was the first chance for parents and incoming cadets to ask face-to-face questions about the scandal and the changes, to see that the academy is not "an institu-

SEE ACADEMY ON 16A

AIR FORCE SCANDAL

Investigation: Rep. Joel Hefley changes independent panel's focus to policy, not blame. 17A

INSIDE



PATRICK AWES

Avalanche goaltender Patrick Roy makes 18 saves as Colorado takes a 2-1 playoff series lead with a 3-0 victory at Minnesota. 1D

TICK, TICK, TICK ...

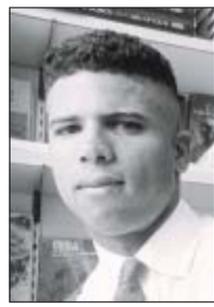
Time's running out on income-tax procrastinators. Today's the deadline for filing tax returns. 1C

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Ujaama: A charge of plotting to start a terrorist training camp in Oregon was dropped.

Guilty plea in Taliban case

Denver-born Islamic activist admits aiding Kabul regime

By Kieran Nicholson
Denver Post Staff Writer

James Ujaama, a Muslim activist arrested in Denver last year, pleaded guilty Monday to lesser charges of conspiracy to provide goods and services to the Taliban.

Ujaama, 37, entered the plea in Seattle before U.S. District Judge Barbara Rothstein.

The plea agreement calls for Ujaama, who has been cooperating with investigators, to serve two years in prison followed by three years of supervised release.

The charge accusing Ujaama of planning to start a terrorist training camp in Bly, Ore., was dropped.

Ujaama, formerly known as James Earnest Thompson, converted to Islam in 1997.

According to court documents, Ujaama admitted to entering Afghanistan, which was controlled at the time by the fundamentalist Islamic regime of the Taliban, in late 2000 to help with

the travel of a "co-conspirator" who attended a "violent jihad training" camp.

In court Monday, Ujaama admitted that he knew why the co-conspirator traveled to Afghanistan.

During the same trip, Ujaama delivered money to Afghanistan and installed software on computers belonging to Taliban officials, a violation of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act.

"Ujaama provided and attempted to provide funds, goods and services to the Taliban and to

SEE UJAAMA ON 15A

Major combat 'over'

Tikrit: Marines capture Hussein's last bastion

Syria: U.S. demands halt to hiding top Iraqis

Order: Factions to talk on interim government



Associated Press / David Guttenfelder

A U.S. soldier points a gun at a man arrested Monday in Baghdad with a group of men who were driving a truck loaded with weapons.

By Knight Ridder Newspapers

TIKRIT, Iraq — The Pentagon on Monday declared the end of significant fighting in Iraq as Marines stormed the heart of Tikrit, suppressed hard-core resistance and captured the last stronghold of Saddam Hussein.

"The major combat operations are over," Maj. Gen. Stanley McChrystal said after more than 3,000 Marines fought their way to the center of Hussein's ancestral hometown.

In Washington, the Bush administration's attention already was shifting to two postwar concerns.

The White House and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld turned up the pressure on Syria, demanding that it stop harboring Iraqi fugitives and renounce terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, even as British Prime Minister Tony Blair denied any U.S.-British plans to invade Syria.

U.S. military officials also looked forward to a meeting today in Nasiriyah, where they hoped to begin forging an interim government for post-Hussein Iraq by welding together rival ethnic, religious and exile factions.

The military action, however, focused on the Marines' success in securing Tikrit.

They seized an opulent presidential palace and rolled their armored vehicles along the city's broad boulevards. They watched white flags flutter from taxicabs, concrete homes and mud huts. They accepted roses from a few grateful residents — and stayed alert for suicide attacks by the remnants of pro-Hussein militias.

Tikrit was the last important center of Hussein's regime, and now it had fallen — much like Basra, Nasiriyah, Najaf, Karbala, Kut, Kirkuk, Irbil, Mosul and Baghdad.

"There is nothing beyond Tikrit," Marine Lt. Col. Doug Hardison said. "That is it. It's now just a function of when to call the win."

SEE WAR ON 4A

'We have heard screaming from holes in the ground.'

Aqeel al-Hessen, on the unexplained disappearances of thousands of Iraqis during Saddam Hussein's reign

Clues as scarce as the missing

By Bruce Finley

Denver Post International Affairs Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq — One bright spring morning, a beloved son left home to complete his final university exam.

But Ahmed Abdullah never returned.

For eight years, his father, Sami, searched with a determination unusual during the rule of Saddam Hussein — his quest taking him right to the presidential palace, where he arranged a brief meeting in 1996.

"Saddam asked me: 'Where has your son gone?'" Abdullah now recalls. "I said: 'I don't know, sir. You are our president. You must help me.'"

He didn't.

Today, Sami Abdullah is turning to American officials, hoping they will make a difference where the dictator didn't — so that he and his mournful wife, Sania, can find the only peace that matters to them.

He and his wife were among thousands of Iraqis searching for answers Monday as secrets of Iraq's closed, totalitarian society continued to spill out, less than a week after the collapse of Hussein's govern-

SEE MISSING ON 10A



The Denver Post / Bruce Finley

Sami Abdullah holds a photo of his son, Ahmed. A government friend said the son was kidnapped by Iraqi intelligence agents.

AMERICA AT WAR: DAY 26

COVERAGE, 4A-13A

Saber rattling: Syria focus of U.S. diplomatic warnings. 4A

Looting: Cleric's rumored religious edict gets some ill-gotten goods returned. 6A

Hussein's son: From liquor to drugs to porn, Odai Hussein lived life of excess. 8A

Rebuilding: Head of postwar effort says U.S.-style democracy will work. 11A

For POW's wife, 'a burden lifted'

By Lisa Falkenberg

The Associated Press

FORT HOOD, Texas — After nearly three anguished weeks, Michelle Williams finally got her day of "sheer joy." Her husband, Chief Warrant Officer David Williams, is no longer a prisoner of war in Iraq, and he will be coming home.

"There was a burden lifted from my heart and from his family's heart," a smiling Williams said Monday at Fort Hood in her first news conference since her husband's capture last month.

On television, she has seen images of her 30-year-old husband — thinner, bearded, but seemingly healthy.

"I saw relief in his eyes, and that meant the world to me," she said.

The Pentagon confirmed Sunday that seven soldiers — six men and one woman — had been found after being formally listed as POWs. The group included five soldiers from the Army's 507th Maintenance Company at Fort Bliss, Texas, and two downed Apache helicopter pilots.

One of the pilots was Williams. Since his capture, the only glimpse his wife had of him was video shown on Iraqi television in which her husband and fellow Chief Warrant Officer Ronald D. Young stare wide-eyed at their captors, looking confused. Michelle Williams obtained a copy of the video from CNN and watched it over and over.

Her 2-year-old son, Jason, relied on a message his father filmed for him and his 6-month-old sister, Madison, the morning before he shipped out to the

SEE POWS ON 13A