

# Charlotte Sun



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TUESDAY  
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## War coming to a close

### Tikrit, last Iraqi city standing, falls with surprising ease

By DAVID ESPO

AP SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit fell Monday with unexpectedly light resistance, the last Iraqi city to succumb to overpowering U.S.-led ground and air forces. A senior Pentagon general said "major combat engagements" probably are over in the 26-day-old war.

As fighting wound down, Pentagon officials disclosed plans to pull two aircraft carriers from the Persian Gulf. At the same time, Iraqi power brokers looked ahead to discussions on a postwar government at a U.S.-arranged meeting set

for Tuesday.

"I would anticipate that the major combat engagements are over," Maj. Gen. Stanley McChrystal told reporters at the Pentagon. Tikrit fell with no sign of the ferocious last stand by Saddam loyalists that some military planners had feared.

Secretary of State Colin Powell hinted at economic or diplomatic sanctions against Syria, saying the government is developing a weapons of mass destruction program and helping Iraqis flee the dying regime. Syrian officials denied the charges.

Looting eased in Baghdad

after days of plundering at government buildings, hospitals and an antiquities museum, and a group of religious and civil opposition leaders met in the capital to plan efforts at renewing power, water, security and other vital services.

American forces found prodigious amounts of Iraqi weaponry, French-made missiles and Russian anti-tank rocket launchers among them. And Army troops discovered thousands of microfilm cartridges and hundreds of paper files inside a Baath Party enclave as the dead regime began yielding its secrets. In Tikrit, about 90 miles north

of Baghdad, "There was less resistance than we anticipated," Brig. Gen. Vincent Brooks told reporters, as American ground troops moved into the city after days of punishing airstrikes.

American forces captured a key Tigris River bridge in the heart of town and seized the presidential palace without a fight as they rolled past abandoned Iraqi military equipment.

They set up checkpoints to keep prominent regime figures from leaving, and a line of armored vehicles was parked in front of a bazaar inside the city.

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### Is Syria next?

Bush threatens Syria with sanctions, alleges it harbors Iraqis. See FRONT 8



### Gunmen kill student

Gunmen armed with an AK-47 rifle and a handgun opened fire in a packed high school gym Monday, killing a 15-year-old boy and wounding three teenage girls in a spray of more than 30 bullets that sent students scrambling for cover.

See FRONT page 7

### HEALTH

### Human gene map nearly complete

The book of genetic instructions for the human body is complete to an accuracy of 99.99 percent, a scientific achievement once deemed impossible but now considered the foundation for a new era of medical advances, an international research team said Monday.

See FRONT page 6



### OUR TOWN

### Man robs area bank

An unknown man, claiming to have a gun, robbed the Englewood Bank at 1111 S. McCall Road around 11:30 a.m. Monday, escaping with an undisclosed amount of money.

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CHARLIE SAYS ...

I'm filing an extension this year, but I'm still not sure which one — .exe? .pdf? .jpg?

50¢

TODAY'S WEATHER

Partly cloudy

High: 83  
Low: 60

TODAY'S COUPONS

- Key West Shuttle .....Front 5
- A Nu You.....Front 5
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2003 SUN COUPON VALUE METER

\$ 42,995

### ENGLEWOOD SERGEANT INJURED IN BAGHDAD



Sun photo by Jonathan Fredin

**Rocket chief:** Sgt. Richard Spearin, who graduated from Lemon Bay High School in 1998, was in charge of a Multiple Launch Rocket System with the U.S. Army's 3rd Division in Iraq until he was injured and flown to Walter Reed Hospital last weekend.

## Area soldier hurt during airport fight

### Lemon Bay High grad sent to Walter Reed

By DON MOORE  
SENIOR WRITER

Sgt. Richard Spearin is every bit the Multiple Launch Rocket System gunner as he stares out of a picture on a photo wall at Lemon Bay High School in Englewood. The wall is made up of photos of former students now serving in the military around the world.

What makes the 1998 graduate of LBHS a standout is that the 22-year-old was seriously injured in Iraq while serving with the 39th Field Artillery attached to the 3rd Infantry Division a few days ago. He was flown to Walter Reed Army

Hospital outside Washington, D.C., over the weekend on the same flight that carried Pfc. Jessica Lynch, who was rescued by special forces after being held as a POW for about 10 days.

Spearin "... was injured a little over a week ago, and his buddy was killed," Linda Griesmeyer, Spearin's mother-in-law-to-be, said Monday. The two soldiers were involved in the 3rd Division's attack on the former Saddam Hussein Airport (now Baghdad International Airport) just outside Baghdad on April 7.

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### SW Florida connection

Sgt. Richard Spearin, who graduated from Lemon Bay High School in Englewood in 1998, was injured a few days ago near Baghdad during the 3rd Army's drive toward the capital city.

Pvt. Kiel Phillips, 32, with the 82nd Airborne Division, lost the use of his left arm in a shootout with black-clad Iraqi irregulars, according to his father, David Phillips of Port Charlotte.

Lance Cpl. Brian Rory Buesing, USMC, who attended Charlotte High School in 1996-97, was killed at An Nasiriyah along with nine other Marines, in an ambush.

Sgt. Brian McGinnis, USMC, son of Millie Williams of Gulf Cove, was killed when his Huey helicopter went down in Iraq during the early days of the war.

## Son of Saddam's hideaway reveals love of fast life

By NIKO PRICE  
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

BAGHDAD, Iraq — His personal zoo has lions, cheetahs and a bear. His storehouse has \$1 million in fine wines, liquor and heroin. His house has Cuban cigars, cases of champagne and downloaded pictures of prostitutes.

While most Iraqis suffered under the U.N. sanctions that drove their country into poverty, Saddam Hussein's eldest son Odai lived a life of fast cars, expensive liquor and easy women, a tour through his bombed house showed Monday.

The walls of a gym were plastered with photographs of women downloaded from the Internet — "the biggest collection of naked women I'd ever seen," said Army Capt. Ed Ballanco, of Montville, N.J. "It looked like something at the Playboy Mansion."



AP photo

**The good life:** U.S. Army physician's assistant Lt. John Frasure, of Milford, Ind., sets down his helmet Monday while trying out President Saddam Hussein's eldest son Odai's bed at Odai's palace in Baghdad.

See HIDEAWAY, page 4

## Tax deadline arrives

By MALCOLM BRENNER  
STAFF WRITER

It's down to the wire. You're confronting the onrushing wall. At midnight tonight, your SUV will turn back into a pumpkin; your accountant, gardener and baby sitter back into mice — unless you have your taxes done!

Every year, some people put off filing their taxes until the very last minute or even beyond. And every year, some poor schmuck newspaper reporter has to write that story. Usually at the last minute.

That's why the Yellow Pages ad for a certain local tax service appeared so interesting, even if it was, as the owner later admitted, dead wrong: "Filing Deadline April 30th Electronically."

That would buy another two weeks to work on the story! But the response from the tax service was hardly expected.

See DEADLINE, page 4

### HEART STUDY

## Moderate exercise not enough, report finds

By EMMA ROSS  
AP MEDICAL WRITER

LONDON — A half-hour brisk walk every day may make you feel better, but it is not enough to ward off premature death from heart trouble, new research suggests.

A study published this week in Heart, a British medical journal, found that only vigorous exercise — such as jogging, hiking, climbing stairs, racket sports and swimming — seems to help lower the risk of early death from heart disease. Other research has shown moderate exercise helps.

Official government recommendations in the United States and elsewhere say 30 minutes of moderate activity every day, such as brisk walking, is sufficient for heart health. A major

See EXERCISE, page 4