

Los Angeles Times

COPYRIGHT 2007 126 PAGES

Thursday, September 20, 2007

DESIGNATED AREAS HIGHER 50¢



MARWAN HARMOUCHE AFP/Getty Images

LEBANON ASSASSINATION

Cars burn after a vehicle bombing killed lawmaker Antoine Ghanem and six other people in a Christian neighborhood outside Beirut. Members of the ruling coalition blamed Syria for the attack, which took place days before parliament is to hold a presidential election. **WORLD, A3**

Changes to war strategy fail in Senate

Republicans again head off a Democratic challenge to Bush's policy that sought more rest time for troops.

By NOAM N. LEVEY
Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — For the eighth time this year, Senate Republicans on Wednesday blocked a Democratic move to challenge U.S. policy in Iraq, turning aside a plan to give troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan more rest between deployments.

The vote marked another victory for the Bush administration, which had lobbied hard against the proposal by Sen. Jim Webb (D-Va.) and continued to command the allegiance of congressional Republicans despite persistent public unhappiness with the war.

And it punctuated Democrats' struggles to persuade GOP lawmakers to back even moderate legislation designed to limit the administration's conduct of the war.

Though Senate Democrats are working on other measures challenging the White House — among them, a proposal to scale back the mission of U.S. forces in Iraq — the defeat of the Webb measure for the second time in two months clouded the prospects for any meaningful legislation opposing the war.

On Wednesday, Democrats fell four votes short of the 60-vote supermajority needed to prevent a filibuster of Webb's proposed amendment to the defense authorization bill.

Just six Republicans joined 49 Democrats and one independ-

ent in voting for the Webb amendment, which also narrowly failed to overcome a filibuster in July when seven GOP lawmakers voted for it. Forty-three Republicans and one independent voted against the proposal Wednesday.

Frustrated Senate Democrats accused Republicans of abdicating their constitutional responsibility to look out for the well-being of the military.

"In blocking this bipartisan bill, Republicans have once again demonstrated that they are [See War, Page A16]

Deadly medical lapses in prison

'Systemic failure' puts even those with asthma at risk, a report finds.

By TIM REITERMAN
Times Staff Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — As many as one in six deaths of California prison inmates last year might have been preventable, according to a study of medical care in 32 state lockups that will be used to help rebuild the troubled system.

One inmate, who reported extreme chest pains in the middle of the night, died of a heart ailment after waiting eight hours to see a doctor.

Another who complained for days of severe abdominal pain died of acute pancreatitis after medical staff did not believe his pleas were credible.

A third died after a two-year delay in diagnosis of his testicular cancer.

And an asthma patient died after failing to receive steroid medication for two days following transfer from a county jail.

The report, released Wednesday by the court-appointed receiver in charge of healthcare for the state's 173,000 prisoners, revealed a broad pattern of delays in diagnosis, poor inmate access to doctors and tests, botched handling of medical records, and failure of medical staff to recognize and treat dangerous conditions.

Officials said some lapses led to disciplinary actions against doctors and nurses.

There were 426 deaths in 2006, including 43 suicides, and the study examined 381 of them.

Eighteen deaths were found to be preventable, meaning better medical management or a [See Prisons, Page A19]

COLUMN ONE

In France, fat makes an entree

The land famous for epicures and good bodies is yielding to junk food and big portions. One response: notes on candy bars to eat more veggies.

By GERALDINE BAUM
Times Staff Writer

Paris
So it turns out that French women do get fat.

French men also. But most troubling to a country that prides itself on an extraordinary approach to life and eating, French children are getting pudgier too.

The problem is nowhere near as bad as it is in the United States, where 65% of the population has serious weight problems, or in parts of southern Europe such as Spain and Portugal, where the vaunted Mediterranean diet hasn't helped the one-third of the children who are more than just plump.

But people here have gotten away from the concept of food as a luxury eaten in modest quantities. Bread, for instance, has always been a staple, especially when people didn't have enough money for meat or cheese. Now the French can have all three — and do.

The lifestyle of the wealthy West has also caught up with France. Working parents increasingly don't have time to shop at outdoor markets and instead use processed foods, often frozen, from the supermarket. And there is more snacking, less savoring going on.

French parents, politicians and doctors are in a panic, believing that if they don't focus now on prevention and reverse the trend, particularly among children, rampant obesity will become another American import, worse even than McDonald's and Disney movies.

Already, 42% of the French population is either overweight or obese, according to the National Institute for Health and Medical Research, known by its French initials, Inserm. The rate among children and adolescents has quadrupled in the last [See France, Page A8]

A small guerrilla band is waging war in Mexico

By HÉCTOR TOBAR
Times Staff Writer

MEXICO CITY — Edmundo Reyes is a slight, unassuming man of 55 who loves baseball and children's literature. Until recently, he sold candy and soft drinks from his family's corner grocery store in this city's Nezahualcoyotl district.

In May, he left to visit relatives in the state of Oaxaca and never returned. His disappear-

ance might have gone unnoticed but for the fact that it has set off a small war that has twice shut down a sizable chunk of the Mexican economy.

Unbeknownst to family and friends, Reyes was conducting a double life: He was a leader of a group calling itself the Popular Revolutionary Army, or EPR in Spanish. His comrades are convinced that he has been captured by "the enemy."

To get back Reyes and another EPR militant said to have dis-

appeared with him, the Popular Revolutionary Army has started bombing the pipelines of Pemex, Mexico's national oil and gas company.

The attacks are the most spectacular campaign by a guerrilla army in Mexico since the 1994 uprising of the Zapatistas in the southern state of Chiapas.

Unlike the Zapatistas, the EPR has struck at a critical element of Mexico's economic infrastructure: the pipelines that [See Mexico, Page A5]

Inside Today's Times



RINGO H. W. CHIU For the Times

It's never too late to have fun

OK, no one will ever mistake L.A. for The City That Never Sleeps, but it doesn't mean you can't cut loose after hours. The Canoga Park Bowl is just one getaway. **Weekend, E26**

New guidance for Spector jury

The judge agrees to revoke an instruction that jurors had said they found confusing. The move aids prosecutors. **California, B1**

Top CSU officials receive big raises

Trustees say the hikes are needed to draw and keep talent. Faculty and students don't agree. **California, B4**

The allegation doesn't quite fit

Crocs aren't the only soft shoes that escalators are chewing up. **Business, C1**

At 80, Lasorda isn't about to slow down

He's many things, but above all, the former manager is a survivor. **Sports, D1**

Up from the ashes

You'd never know Laurie Frank's home has been through so much. **Home, F1**

Weather: Cloudy with slight chance of showers. Downtown: 68/58. Page B10

Latest news: latimes.com
Complete index: Page A2



Lawsuit king wins one on his way to prison

By MOLLY SELVIN and JESSICA GUYN
Times Staff Writers

As he negotiated the deal that would send him to prison and seal his disgrace, the king of class actions was still working the system.

William S. Lerach, in agreeing to plead guilty to one count of conspiracy in connection with a kickback scheme that paid people to serve as plaintiffs in lawsuits, insisted that the firm he founded in San Diego in 2004 be shielded from prosecution.

Its reputation as a litigator of class-action suits against what Lerach once called the "dishonorable and despicable greed" of corporate America could be preserved. Maybe a little of his own reputation would be too.

"He's falling on his sword," said David Lisi, a corporate de-



PAT SULLIVAN Associated Press

SEEKING A DEAL: William Lerach's plea agreement includes a provision that his firm not be prosecuted.

fense lawyer in Silicon Valley. "You have to admire loyalty like that."

Lerach has been more loathed than admired by corporate executives. He was so effective at shaking awards and settlements loose from companies [See Lerach, Page A20]

Rather's suit singles out CBS executives

By MATEA GOLD
Times Staff Writer

NEW YORK — Veteran CBS anchor Dan Rather filed a \$70-million lawsuit Wednesday against his former employer of 44 years, alleging that executives at the network damaged his reputation and broke the terms of his contract by sidelining him during his

final months at CBS News and then forcing him out.

The lawsuit, filed in New York state Supreme Court, comes as a startling postscript to the saga that enveloped the news division three years ago, when a furor erupted over a piece Rather did for the weekday edition of "60 Minutes" alleging that President Bush received preferential treatment during his Vietnam War-

era stint in the Texas Air National Guard.

An independent panel concluded that documents cited in the story could not be authenticated.

In the ensuing controversy, a producer was fired and three executives were forced to resign. Six months after the broadcast, Rather stepped down from the [See Rather, Page A18]



FUEL EFFICIENCY



E85 ETHANOL



HYBRID



ELECTRIC



FUEL CELL

Gas-friendly to gas-free.

Find out how we can all do more to use less at chevy.com

AN AMERICAN REVOLUTION



Chevy is a trademark of the GM Corp. ©2007 GM Corp. Buckle up, America!