

The Birmingham News

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Soldiers report stress, depression

300,000 toll cited; only half seek help

By PAULINE JELINEK
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Roughly one in every five U.S. soldiers who have survived the bombs and other dangers of Iraq and Afghanistan now suffers from major depression or post-traumatic stress, an independent study said Thursday. It estimated the toll at 300,000 or more.

As many or more report possible brain injuries from explosions or other head wounds, said the study, the first major survey from outside the government.

Only about half of those with mental health problems have sought treatment. Even fewer of those with head injuries have seen doctors.

Army Surgeon General Eric Schoomaker said the report, from the Rand Corp., was welcome.

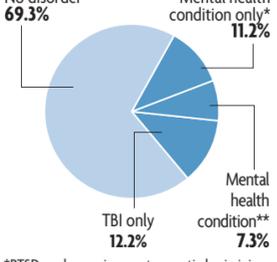
"They're helping us to raise the visibility and the attention that's needed by the American public at large," said Schoomaker, a lieutenant general. "They are making this a national debate."

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MENTAL STRESS AMONG MILITARY VETS

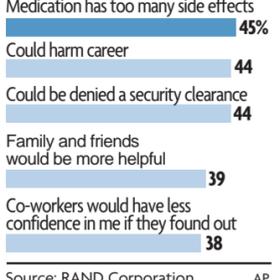
More than 30 percent of U.S. troops who served in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars suffer from depression or post-traumatic stress disorder or have experienced a traumatic brain injury.

PERCENTAGE WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION



*PTSD or depression, no traumatic brain injury
 **PTSD or depression and traumatic brain injury

TOP 5 BARRIERS TO SEEKING MENTAL HEALTH CARE



Source: RAND Corporation AP

"In the country, the only time you see folks is when you go to church, go to a funeral or go to a barbecue club."

Gump Ozment
member of the Sumterville Club



NEWS STAFF/JERONIMO NISA

Jim Howard puts coals around a hog being pit-barbecued at the Timillichee Barbecue Club near Geiger.

Barbecue clubs kindle a savory rural tradition

Whole-hog feasts are 'old-fashioned country'

By THOMAS SPENCER
News staff writer

Behind the same tin-roof shack where the Timillichee Barbecue Club was founded 81 years ago, Junior Brown blazed a propane flamethrower into a 10-foot-tall furnace packed with a pile of hickory wood.

Soon crackling in red flame, the fire sent the familiar scented smoke skyward and dropped precious hot coals below, coals that would be used to cook the whole hog waiting on a nearby pit. The next evening the pig would be the centerpiece of the season's first communal feast.

"You're in old-fashioned country," said J. M. "Sonny" Kuykendall, 76, Timillichee's oldest member.

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NEWS STAFF/JERONIMO NISA

Hickory goes up in flames as it's burned to create coals for the barbecue pit.

Mayor Barkley? He's considering Leeds

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Top-ranked Tide golfers looking to add trophy

SPORTS | Section C

HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

Report says Siegelman probe may be tainted

Democrats urge probe of Justice, Rove testimony

By MARY ORNDORFF
News Washington correspondent

WASHINGTON — Democrats on the House Judiciary Committee issued a report Thursday saying they strongly suspect former Gov. Don Siegelman was the victim of a politically tainted prosecution and followed it with a request for an independent probe of the Department of Justice.

Also Thursday, Democrats called on former White House political adviser Karl Rove to testify about the Siegelman case and answer questions about whether he



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or his staff pressured prosecutors to pursue the former governor.

"There is extensive evidence that the prosecution of (Siegelman) was directed or promoted by Washington officials, likely including (Rove), and that political considerations influenced the decision to bring charges," stated the report, compiled after a 10-month investigation.

The report indicates Siegelman's case has taken on greater prominence amid the broader

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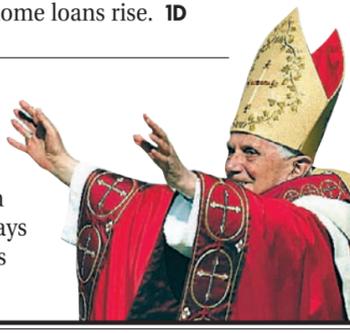
INSIDE

State's bankruptcy rate among worst

Birmingham lawyers think the situation could get worse as problems with home loans rise. 1D

Pope meets with abuse victims

Pope Benedict XVI prays with victims of clergy sex abuse, says the church must heal wounds the scandal caused. 4A



INSIDE

New state clinic to treat vets' stress disorders

The clinic, which will open May 1, is the state's first to treat Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. 7A

Lanier rebounds toward 80% grad rate

High school no longer called 'dropout factory'

By RAHKIA NANCE
News staff writer

More than 80 percent of the students who started at Bessemer's Jess Lanier High School four years ago will have a diploma by the end of the

school year, officials say, in a dramatic turnaround for a school once labeled one of the nation's "dropout factories."

Jess Lanier's graduation rate is expected to be 81 percent or higher this

year, said Principal Jerome Cook — close to the statewide rate of 82 percent.

Last fall, the school was placed on a list of the nation's "dropout factories" by researchers at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, based on data from previous years.

"It's just good news," Cook said.

"Over the years Jess Lanier has gone from an A school to a B school to a C school and all the way down to a D school. It was my hope when I became principal that I would be able to bring it back to where it needs to be." He became principal in 2003.

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