

# News Digest

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## California powerless against blackouts

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Traffic lights and computer screens went dark Monday in Beverly Hills, Silicon Valley and other communities up and down California as rolling blackouts swept across the state for the first time.

The state's power grid ordered the outages after electricity reserves fell almost to zero because of a transformer fire, high demand and a lack of power imports.

Police officers and sheriff's deputies scrambled to direct traffic at intersections. At the Public Utilities Commission in San Francisco, deputy chief of staff Harriett Burt worked through the outage with a battery-powered lantern.

"I think we'll just carry on as everybody else does with these," she said cheerfully. Rolling outages were last ordered Jan.

17 and 18, but they were limited to parts of Northern California. This time, the blackouts stretched from San Francisco to San Diego and, for the first time, reached into the suburbs of Los Angeles. Los Angeles was unaffected because it has its own municipal power company.

"Everything has come to a stop," said Joan Tockey, a clerk at Mahogany Smoked Meats and Meadow Farms Country Smokehouse in Bishop, 270 miles north of Los Angeles. "We'll have to lock the door."

The blackouts knocked out power in the busy Los Angeles-area port of Long Beach and affected homes in suburban San Diego and the state capital of Sacramento. At San Francisco Fire Station 15, surprised crews scrambled to get power from emergency backup generators.

The blackouts were ordered by the California Independent System Operator

shortly before noon after the state fell 1,000 megawatts short of the power it needs. A thousand megawatts is about enough to power 1 million homes.

The ISO declared a Stage 3 alert, the highest level of emergency. It blamed increased demand for electricity because of a warm snap, less power from the Northwest and the loss of 1,400 megawatts because of a transformer fire at a Southern California plant. It also said 12,000 megawatts were unavailable because of idled plants — including some where officials say they haven't been paid for months and cannot afford to buy the natural gas they need to operate.

The ISO ordered the state's two biggest utilities — Pacific Gas & Electric and Southern California Edison — to cut a total of 1,000 megawatts. The two utilities together serve 8.7 million customers across the state. A third utility, San Diego

Gas & Electric Co., also cut power to some 41,000 customers.

SoCal Edison ordered blackouts across the Los Angeles area, including Chino, Beverly Hills, Long Beach and Santa Monica, for up to an hour. Spokesman Paul Klein said about 20,000 customers had their service interrupted.

PG&E spokesman Ron Low said the order would affect about 105,000 customers. He refused to specify locations, but the power went out in Oakland, Palo Alto and Salinas, south of San Jose.

Power alerts had been lifted in February, thanks to more imported electricity and the return of power plants that had been down for repairs.

California is anticipating a summer of power shortages and potential rolling blackouts. Natural gas supplies are tight, water supplies are down and a heat wave could drive up demand for power.

World/Nation

The Associated Press

### Algeria

#### Islamic militants suspected in attacks against motorists

ALGIERS — Armed groups killed five people and injured 23 others in three attacks in the African nation of Algeria, newspaper reports said Monday.

Islamic militants are suspected of detonating an explosive and spraying cars with mortar fire Saturday near Thénia, about 30 miles east of Algiers, Le Matin newspaper reported. Two civilians were killed and 23 were wounded, it said.

The group of 20 assailants had set up two roadblocks along the road from Thénia to Boumerdes, a common method of extorting money from motorists.

In another attack, assailants shot two police officers to death Saturday evening in Guelma, about 340 miles east of the capital, the daily Liberte reported. That same day, a homemade bomb killed a 28-year-old policeman in nearby Annaba as security forces carried out a search operation, the paper said.

### Idaho

#### Mostly Republican, all-white legislature called insensitive

BOISE — At 89 percent, the Idaho Legislature is the nation's most Republican. At 100 percent, it also is the whitest.

Many of the 105 lawmakers pressing to conclude their 2001 session represent constituencies with small but growing minority populations.

But not a single legislator belongs to a minority group, perhaps contributing to the rash of racially and ethnically insensitive statements some of them have made this year.

The House State Affairs Committee rejected a Senate-passed bill to eliminate place names with the word "squaw" — the derivation of which is unclear, but a term many American Indians find vulgar and offensive.

One legislator, who voted against that change, defended his earlier use of the term "Jew 'em down" during a committee debate.

And in a House floor debate on eliminating the agriculture industry's exemption from the \$5.15 minimum wage, one lawmaker referred — by reading a letter from a constituent — to farm workers who live on welfare and food stamps and send their paychecks home to Mexico.

### New York

#### Spike Lee to write column arguing Babe Ruth was black

NEW YORK — He loves basketball and he's from Brooklyn. But filmmaker Spike Lee will be writing about baseball for a new upscale Manhattan magazine.

Lee has been hired to write a sports column for Gotham. His debut effort will appear in the magazine's third issue and, according to Monday's Daily News, will contend that Babe Ruth was black.

Lee did not respond to requests for comment, and Gotham editor Joseph Steuer was unable to shed light on the subject.

"All I know is that basically he's writing a column for me, and I was asked to pull a picture of Babe Ruth for it," Steuer said.

### Michigan

#### Safety group: Chrysler sold defective vehicles knowingly

DETROIT — Chrysler has spent \$1.3 billion since 1993 buying back vehicles with chronic defects, then reselling the bulk of these to consumers, a safety group says documents show.

The automaker said the documents, unsealed last week in North Carolina, showed no wrongdoing and were being mischaracterized by consumer groups and product-liability attorneys.

Chrysler was bought by Germany's Daimler-Benz in 1998 and is now a unit of DaimlerChrysler.

According to the documents, Chrysler said it repurchased more than 50,000 vehicles with persistent mechanical problems, then repurchased about two-thirds of the investment, reselling the majority of them to dealers at auction.

## USS Greeneville crewman admits he ignored sonar

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii — A key crewman aboard the USS Greeneville admitted Monday that he violated orders requiring him to report ships nearby but said he never realized one vessel was dangerously close.

Petty Officer 1st Class Patrick Seacrest told a Navy court of inquiry that he never noticed a ship was within 4,000 yards of the submarine before a fatal collision because he was analyzing another sonar contact.

"I did not see that 4,000 yards," said Seacrest, the Greeneville's fire control technician.

That statement conflicts with the testimony of a Navy investigator, who said Seacrest earlier claimed he didn't report the close contact because civilians blocked his access to officers. Seacrest said Monday the civilians were not an impediment.

Seacrest was expected to be the final crewman to testify at the inquiry into the Feb. 9 collision between the Greeneville and the Japanese trawler Ehime Maru.

The submarine was demonstrating a rapid-surfacing drill for 16 civilians when it rammed into the trawler and sank it. Nine people, including four teen-agers on an expedition to learn commercial fishing, were killed.

The inquiry has focused on whether Greeneville Cmdr. Scott Waddle, with his ship running behind schedule, rushed preparations for surfacing and whether he failed to look long enough or high enough to detect the Ehime Maru during his periscope search. Also under investigation are the executive officer, Lt. Cmdr. Gerald Pfeifer, and the officer of the deck, Lt. jg. Michael Coen.

A Navy doctor was scheduled to testify after Seacrest. Lawyers for the three officers will then present their cases. Attorneys for Waddle and Coen were still awaiting word on requests for testimonial immunity, which would prevent prosecutors from using the

"None of my crew members should be accountable or responsible for that accident."

Scott Waddle  
Greenville commander

officers' testimony to seek future charges.

Waddle's civilian lawyer, Charles Gittins, has said the skipper wouldn't testify without protection. Lawyers for Coen and Pfeifer, who hasn't requested immunity, have declined to comment.

Before court Monday, Waddle told reporters that if he did testify, he would take the blame for the collision.

"The first word I will say to the court will be that fact — that I'm accountable, and I'm responsible for the accident that led to the tragic collision and sinking of the Ehime Maru," Waddle said. "None of my crew members should be accountable or responsible for that accident."

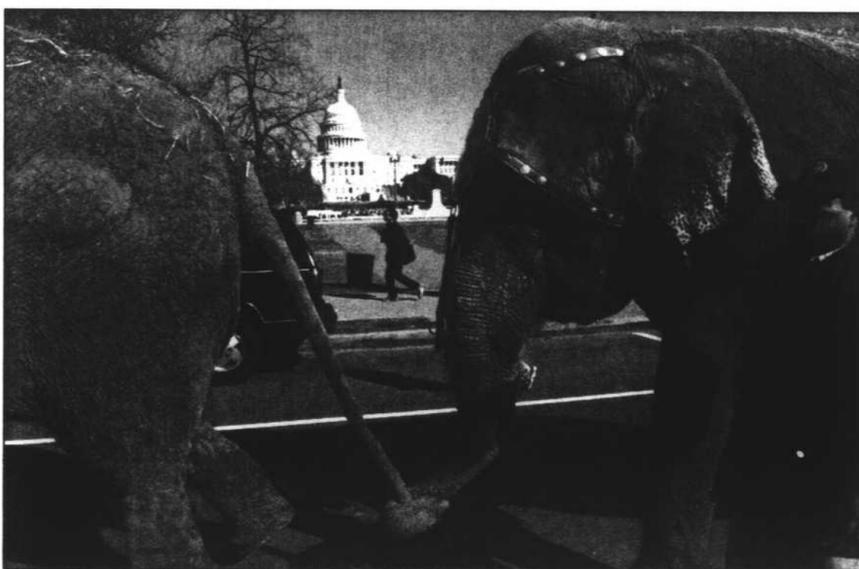
Nevertheless, Monday's testimony showed Seacrest was at least partially responsible.

The technician, who was granted immunity for his testimony, admitted he fell down on the job and violated several orders regarding his duties.

As fire control technician, Seacrest takes sonar data and does a computer analysis to develop a detailed picture of the location and distances of other vessels. He is then supposed to manually plot that data on a graphic display inside the sub's control room. He admitted that he failed to maintain that plot and never told officers he stopped.

"You got lazy, didn't you Petty Officer Seacrest?" demanded Capt. Bruce MacDonald, counsel for the court.

"Yes, sir," he replied. "A little bit."



Elephants from the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus pass by Capitol Hill on their way to the MCI center on Monday.

Newsmakers

## Socialists win Paris election

### Election winner Delanoé aims to improve the quality of life in the country's capital.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PARIS — The Socialists conquered the French capital in municipal elections Sunday, wrenching Paris from President Jacques Chirac's conservatives and a century of nearly unbroken rule by the right.

Winner Bertrand Delanoé, an unassuming, openly gay politician, was relatively unknown before the campaign but struck a chord with Paris' 2 million residents by focusing on improving the quality of life. He promised to reduce pollution and address concerns about the poor suburbs.

But Sunday's historic victory in the city of light, and a second prestigious win in the rightist bastion of Lyon, were dimmed by the left's loss of more than two dozen sizable towns around France. Losses by several high-profile ministers in Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin's government proved a particular humiliation.

The runoff local elections provided a measure of the political landscape a year ahead of presidential balloting in which Chirac and Jospin may run against each other.

The Paris and Lyon victories saved the left's face.

"Today, Parisians have freely decided in favor of change in the capital," said Delanoé in a victory speech at his campaign headquarters. Delanoé, 50, defeated Philippe Seguin, a candidate for Chirac's Rally for the Republic party.

"Paris is liberated," chanted a crowd that gathered in front of City Hall.

This Sunday, Delanoé will officially become mayor of Paris — a post held by Chirac for 18 years — when the city council, which serves as a sort of electoral college, votes him in.

He will replace incumbent Mayor Jean Tiberi, whose own candidacy divided the right. In his public demeanor, Delanoé is a man like his patron, Jospin, France's dry, professorial prime minister. The two are friends.

One of a handful of openly gay politicians in still-conservative France, Delanoé revealed his

homosexuality on a television program in 1999. He is an active supporter of gay issues, taking part in Gay Pride marches and campaigning for a controversial law to give some legal rights to unmarried couples, including same-sex couples.

His victory was widely seen as a cry for change at City Hall, tarnished by kickback scandals that allegedly date to the era of Chirac.

Tiberi's refusal to withdraw from the race got him expelled from Chirac's party and added further drama to a contest that riveted the nation. However, the left's losses in big cities they had held like Strasbourg tempered the humiliation suffered by the right.

Seguin blamed the indirect voting system, and Tiberi's refusal to withdraw, for his loss. Some districts provide more city councilors than others.

"It is clear," Seguin said. "That if we had had a direct (vote), I would be the mayor of Paris tonight."

The elections, which began with a first round March 11, were the first in years in which the far-right National Front took a back seat.

## Macedonian army in the fight

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TETOVO, Macedonia — Government tanks rumbled into Macedonia's second-largest city Monday to fight ethnic Albanian insurgents, while NATO pledged to "starve" the rebels by cutting supply lines from neighboring Kosovo.

A spokesman for the Macedonian government, Antonio Milosovski, pledged "definite action" — a major counterattack — saying field commanders would give the order "soon."

The appearance of heavy armor in Tetovo also seemed to be an attempt by the government to show that the army was part of efforts to prevent the monthlong guerrilla war from expanding further southward from its origins along the border with Kosovo.

The government has relied primarily on police and anti-terrorist units to fight the rebels, leading to speculation about the loyalties of the conscript army, particularly its ethnic Albanian members. The rebels have called on all ethnic Albanians in Macedonia of fighting age to join their ranks.

Fighting ebbed by mid-afternoon Monday, and only the occasional boom of government artillery lobbing shells into the foothills skirting Tetovo was heard, leaving the city of 80,000 at its quietest since late last week. Still, edgy residents continued to flee.

The rebels, who say they are fighting for greater rights for ethnic Albanians, insist their battle is not being instigated by the former Kosovo Liberation Army in Kosovo, a province of Serbia, the main Yugoslav republic.

But the latest uprising shares the aspirations of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo for self-determination, if not outright independence, potentially in a "greater" Kosovo expanded with ethnic Albanian parts of Macedonia and southern Serbia. Although ethnic relations in Slav-dominated Macedonia have been relatively trouble-free — an ethnic Albanian party is a partner in the government — substantial numbers of the minority feel they are treated as second-class citizens.

European Union foreign ministers meeting in Belgium agreed on measures for Macedonia that included technical aid for a census — one of the demands by the rebels, who claim the number of ethnic Albanians is underreported.

Four government tanks were initially sent to Tetovo. Later Monday, one more tank, eight armored personnel carriers and eight army trucks were seen entering the city.

As the army boosted its presence, NATO Secretary-General Lord Robertson said the international force in Kosovo was moving more troops to the border with Macedonia to cut off the supply lines to insurgents.

"We are determined to cut this limited group of extremists of the means" of carrying on the fighting, Robertson told reporters in Brussels.

Macedonian Foreign Minister Srdjan Kerim said his government was not asking for the alliance to cross the border.

"The Macedonian security forces are able and will be able to take care of the security of our country" once NATO cuts off the rebel supply lines.

### Weather

#### TODAY

Mostly cloudy  
High 58, low 36

#### TOMORROW

Partly cloudy  
High 57, low 37

Daily Nebraskan

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Ask for the appropriate section editor  
at (402) 472-2588  
or e-mail dn@unl.edu.

Fax number: (402) 472-1761  
World Wide Web: www.dailynebr.com  
The Daily Nebraskan (USPS 144-080)  
is published by the UNL Publications  
Board, 20 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St.,  
Lincoln, NE 68588-0448, Monday through  
Friday during the academic year; weekly  
during the summer sessions. The public  
has access to the Publications Board.  
Readers are encouraged to submit story  
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Nebraskan by calling (402) 472-2588.  
Subscriptions are \$60 for one year.  
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Periodical postage paid at Lincoln, NE.  
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