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LAST COOL ONE

Partly cloudy,
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Forecast, F8

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Bush, Cheney rebuked over claims before war

The Senate Intelligence Committee says the administration "led the nation into war under false pretenses."

BY GREG MILLER
LOS ANGELES TIMES

WASHINGTON — In a long-delayed report, the Senate Intelligence Committee yesterday rebuked President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney for making prewar claims — particularly that Iraq had close ties to al-Qaida — that were not supported by available intelligence.

The report, which was opposed by most Republicans on the panel, accuses the president and other members of his administration of repeatedly exaggerating evidence of an al-Qaida connection to take advantage of the charged climate after Sept. 11. It amounts to the most pointed reproach to date of the Bush administration's use of intelligence to build the case for the Iraq war. But the document stops short of calling for any follow-up investigation or sanction.

"In making the case for war, the administration repeatedly presented intelligence as fact when in reality it was unsubstantiated, contradicted, or even non-

existent," said Sen. John D. Rockefeller IV, D-W.Va., chairman of the intelligence panel. "Sadly, the Bush administration led the nation into war under false pretenses."

In a second report, the committee provided new details on clandestine, post-Sept. 11 meetings between Defense Department officials and Iranian dissidents seeking support for a plan to overthrow the Islamic regime. In that document, the committee faulted national security adviser Stephen Hadley and others for their roles in an effort

SEE IRAQ, A9

Gates forces out 2 Air Force leaders for nuclear-weapons security lapses

McCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS

WASHINGTON — In an extraordinary indication of concern about the handling of the nation's nuclear arsenal, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates yesterday forced the top civilian and military leaders of the Air Force to resign and appointed a former secretary of defense to devise better ways to guard nuclear weapons.

Gates said he took the action after a

Pentagon report last month found that the Air Force had systematic problems in the way it guarded and transported U.S. nuclear weapons and their components.

"The Air Force leadership has drifted with respect to perhaps its most sensitive mission," Gates said.

Air Force Secretary Michael W.

SEE GATES, A9

Part of an occasional series on R.I. charter schools

The right track

At the Blackstone Academy Charter School, getting students into college is more than a dream

BY JENNIFER D. JORDAN
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Daniel F. Goncalves graduates from high school this afternoon, an accomplishment his family, former teachers, truant officer and even he doubted would ever happen. Daniel skipped most of his first three years of high school.

He was repeatedly suspended. He spent four months in a group home for troubled youths. He came close to dropping out. But the educators at Blackstone Academy Charter School refused to doubt him.

Midway through his sophomore year at Shea High School, in Pawtucket, Daniel transferred to the publicly financed charter school, which offers small classes and personal attention and has built a reputation for turning around struggling students.

Daniel, 17, says Blackstone Academy is the reason he received an A in precalculus this year and is receiving his diploma today. This fall, he will attend a one-year college transition program at Brandeis University on a full, \$48,000 scholarship.

"I want to say I've made a difference in my own life, because I have tried. But in the end, it's the people in my life who have made the difference," Daniel said Tuesday, one of the last days of his senior year. He listed the names of the charter school's two directors, the debate team coach, his adviser and his friends.

SEE SCHOOL, A4

Blake Daniels, top, 16, from Pawtucket, plays guitar as he waits for the morning meeting to begin at Blackstone Academy Charter School in Pawtucket. At right, senior Chantaya Costa of Pawtucket sits in English class. She will be attending Brown University in the fall.

THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / BILL MURPHY



Mortgage defaults accelerate nationally

Foreclosures hit a record high in the first quarter of the year — although in Rhode Island they leveled off.

BY JEANNINE AVERSA
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The foreclosure hammer is hitting ever harder. People lost their homes at the highest rate on record in the first three months of the year, and late payments soared to a new high, too — an alarming sign that the housing crisis and its damage to the national economy may only get worse.

Dumping more empty homes on an already glutted market also is likely to put a further drag on home prices — extending a vicious circle.

In Rhode Island, where home-foreclosure rates have been rising since the end of 2005, the latest Mortgage Bankers' survey showed the pace of new foreclosures leveling off.

Nationally, slumping home values are being blamed in large part for the rising tide of foreclosures. Troubled borrowers are left owing more to the bank than their homes are worth. They can't sell without taking a huge financial hit, so they just walk away.

In fact, Americans' equity in their homes — usually their single biggest asset — now has dropped to the lowest level on record in figures going back to the end of World War II. Homeowners' portion of

SEE FORECLOSE, A6

Questions abound as state budget deadline nears

Behind closed doors, lawmakers are deciding how to plug a \$425-million budget hole for the fiscal year that starts July 1.

BY STEVE PEOPLES
JOURNAL STATE HOUSE BUREAU

PROVIDENCE — The hallway outside State House Room 35 — the heart of Rhode Island's budget battle — has been quiet this week.

The hearings before the House Finance Committee are over. The parents of the disabled children, the business leaders, the labor unions, the mayors and the social-service lobbyists have come and gone.

They have already pleaded for their programs, their cities and their interests.

And now, a few key lawmakers are deciding behind closed doors how to fill a \$425-million budget hole for the fiscal year that begins in 25 days.

Those discussions are taking place even as state departments struggle to finish the current year in the black. The deficit-avoidance plan approved last month included saving \$15 million by forcing

SEE BUDGET, A8

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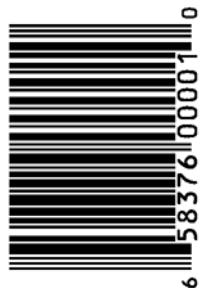
Your turn: Do you think regular public schools could adopt more hands-on approaches to help more seniors go to college? To respond, and for more on charter schools in Rhode Island, go to projo.com/education

FLIP YOUR TASSEL: Between today and the end of next weekend, 67 of the area's 88 high schools will grant diplomas to some 11,000 students. Turn to The Journal and projo.com for stories, pictures and lists of the graduates.

COMING SUNDAY

The valedictorians of '08.

IN SUNDAY EXTRA: The Learning Community charter school may be a model for urban education.



INSIDE TODAY

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SOX DRAFT PORTSMOUTH PITCHER

Ryan Westmoreland — who recently tossed a perfect game — joins the Red Sox in the fifth round of Major League Baseball's First-Year Player Draft. **C7**

REMEMBERING HOSPITAL TRUST

Six hundred former employees of the bank that grew from a hospital will gather next week for a reunion where they'll recall the camaraderie and pride in working for a deeply rooted local company. **F1**



MATURE STARS SCORING BIG

A look at the summer's biggest movies says a lot about baby boomers' ability to bend markets: Consider the ages of the stars in *Indiana Jones*, *Iron Man* and *Sex and the City*. **E3**