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Smoke draws curious, grateful in Moss Point

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HOME AT LAST

Coast Guard unit returns

By GAYLON PARKER
Mississippi Press Staff

GULFPORT — With flags waving and families smiling, the Coast Guard's 308th Port Security Unit was welcomed home Thursday here at the U.S. Navy Seabee Base.

More than 110 Coast Guard reservists returned from the nearly seven-month deployment to the Port of Ash Shuaiba, Kuwait, where they helped protect arriving and departing ships, which transported troops and supplies to the region in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Among the returning personnel were eight Jackson County residents, many completing their first long-term deployment of any kind.

Tanner Williams resident Celia Whitmore clutched a small American flag as she waited for her son, Jeremy Gandy, to touch down in the C-130 Coast Guard Search and Rescue plane. It was her son's first deployment, she said, but that his absence was easier because the military provided many avenues for communication with her 19-year-old son. She also sent about 117 Christmas stockings to the deployed members.

"That's just my heart that went over there," Whitmore, who also has twin 11-year-old sons, said. "His brothers really missed him because they were inseparable before he left. Some days they spent all day on the phone with him."

The family talked to Gandy almost every day, she said, either through e-mail, on the Internet or on a cellular phone he bought in Kuwait. In fact, Internet facilities were available to the troops 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Gandy had a special request for his Mom when he returned.

"I'm going home to make him homemade buttermilk biscuits," Whitmore said. "They're the things he's missed most since he's

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BOMBING IN SPAIN

Horror in Madrid

Pas student in Spain shaken from hotel bed by explosions

By LINDSAY O'QUIN
Mississippi Press Staff

MADRID, Spain — Mary Etta Jones woke up before her alarm sounded.

Fifteen minutes later, the Pascagoula resident's bed shook Thursday as a series of 10 bombs detonated in the train station 100 yards away from her Madrid hotel room.

One hundred and ninety two people were killed in the blasts. While a statement to an Arab newspaper claimed responsibility on behalf of al-Qaida, the Spanish government believes Basque separatists may be responsible.

"There's a lot of construction, so I assumed it was that. I just thought, it's not a big deal. I'm sure it's nothing."

But when Jones and her friends stepped outside, "we knew something was wrong. Everyone ... poured onto the streets and out of the shops."

Jones

See STUDENT, Page 8-A



AP

Police carry bodies out of a passenger train in the Atocha train station in Madrid Thursday.

Worst terrorist attack in Spanish history kills at least 192

By MAR ROMAN
Associated Press Writer

MADRID, Spain — A series of bombs hidden in backpacks exploded in quick succession Thursday, blowing apart four commuter trains and killing at least 192 people and wounding more than 1,400. Spain at first blamed Basque separatists but a shadowy group claimed responsibility in the name of al-Qaida for the worst terrorist attack in Spanish history.

Panicked rush-hour commuters trampled on each other, abandoning their bags and shoes, after two of the bombs went off in one train in the Atocha station in the heart of Madrid. Train cars were turned into twisted wrecks and platforms were strewn with corpses. Cell phones rang unanswered on the bodies of the dead as frantic relatives tried to call them.

"March 11, 2004, now holds its place in the history of infamy," Prime Minister Jose

See EXPLOSIONS, Page 7-A



Staff Photos/William Colgin

Celia Whitmore gives her son, Jeremy Gandy, a welcome home kiss and hug as he returns from Kuwait. The Coast Guard Reserve's 308th Port Security Unit arrived in Gulfport Thursday afternoon from a seven-month deployment in the Middle East.

Crowds of family and loved ones anxiously wait for Coast Guard reservists to exit the C-130 that arrived in Gulfport Thursday afternoon bringing the 308th Port Security Unit back from deployment in Kuwait.



Budget cuts to close center for GC families

By SHANNON HARTLEY
Special to The Mississippi Press

LUCEDALE — Thanks to state budget cuts, an agency under the umbrella of the George County Department of Human Services, the Family First Resource Center, will close March 22.

A letter from Mississippi See CUTS, Page 8-A



Old Crab

My wife's dadburn fat cousin has been visiting us this week — the Prince of Whales!

PEACE LIKE A RIVER

Couple crafts dream home on Pascagoula

By DONNA HARRIS
Mississippi Press Staff

MOSS POINT — When construction of their home is completed, Michael and Fredna Vice anticipate evening views of the sun melting into the Pascagoula River.

They'd like to be in the house by September, in time for a family reunion. However, there's still no walls within the three-story mansion and the front yard is filled with construction debris.

Still, as Fredna Vice leads an impromptu See RIVER, Page 4-A



Staff Photo/Carisa McCain

Michael and Fredna Vice are building their dream home, Magnolia Place, by themselves on Magnolia Point. The 20,000-square-foot home sitting on about 100 acres boasts a chapel, an underground shooting range, a library, a room to display china, a room to wrap Christmas presents and wraparound views.

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New substance abuse treatment center opens

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MSU gunning for No. 1 seed

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