

1 of 3 DOCUMENTS

Copyright 2005 Cable News Network
All Rights Reserved.

CNN

SHOW: AMERICAN MORNING 7:00 AM EST

November 28, 2005 Monday

TRANSCRIPT: 112801CN.V74

SECTION: NEWS; Domestic

LENGTH: 8023 words

HEADLINE: Trial of Saddam Hussein Delayed; Severe Weather Hits in State After State

BYLINE: Soledad O'Brien, Miles O'Brien, Andy Serwer, Bob Franken, Nic Robertson, Aneesh Raman, Anthony Gomes, Carol Costello

GUESTS: Michael Newton, Michael Scharf, Russel Honore, Hugh Sampson

HIGHLIGHT:

Severe weather hitting in state after state. A dramatic morning already in Baghdad as the trial of Saddam Hussein and seven others is back on.

BODY:

MILES O'BRIEN, CNN ANCHOR: I'm Miles O'Brien. A dramatic morning already in Baghdad as the trial of Saddam Hussein, seven others, back on. Defendants testing the patience of the judge early on. We're hearing the first witness testimony, and we're live, of course, in Baghdad.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN, CNN ANCHOR: I'm Soledad O'Brien. President Bush is heading to southern Arizona with a plan to crack down on illegal immigration. One controversial measure could draw fire from conservatives. We've got a live report just ahead.

M. O'BRIEN: And severe weather hitting in state after state. Jacqui just called it the clash of the seasons. Deadly twisters rip through Arkansas and Kansas, while an early blizzard out West brings holiday travel to a standstill. We will look at where these storms are now, on this AMERICAN MORNING.

For those of you just tuning in, we've already been on for an hour. And tomorrow...

S. O'BRIEN: New hours today. We start at 6:00 a.m. Eastern Time every morning.

M. O'BRIEN: Right, we want you to get up early tomorrow and catch the first hour with us, OK? It's good to be here.

S. O'BRIEN: It's actually been a fascinating morning because we've been monitoring the trial of Saddam Hussein. They are now after that break they took, with the defense attorney saying that essentially they might boycott the whole proceedings, when they realized that in fact they could just replace them with court-appointed attorneys. That plan was sort of scuttled. But it has been fascinating to watch.

Right now, they appear to be in a recess now. Plus, what we're getting from there is on a delay, the tape, so we're going to bring that to you.

Trial of Saddam Hussein Delayed; Severe Weather Hits in State After Stat

M. O'BRIEN: Yes, it's kind of confusing. Basically, we're getting everything at about a 20-minute delay. And so when we say things are happening, we have to kind of do a little time shifting.

Right now, we know this, there is a recess under way. And as soon as it's getting going, we'll let you know. About 20 minutes after that, we'll get those pictures, OK, so stay with us on all of this, all throughout the morning. Aneesh Raman is live in Baghdad. He's been watching it for us live, and with 20-minute tape delay.

And, Aneesh, first of all, what do we know about this recess? It was awfully early on that they decided to take this break. What was the reason given?

ANEESH RAMAN, CNN CORRESPONDENT: Well, they're saying, Miles, that it's about lunch essentially. They started this session late. They were to of begun around 10:00 a.m. local. Instead it started just after noon. So they might be keeping to their schedule. The morning session adjourned about an hour or so ago. And as you mentioned, we're waiting for the afternoon session to begin, after which for about a half hour after that, we'll see the video.

Now two threads, really, from the morning session, the legal and the symbolic. In terms of the legal, an incredible image, former U.S. attorney general Ramsey Clark, not just in Baghdad, but in that courtroom, officially being sworn in as an adviser to the defense team. In his statement so far, he said he would raise issues of security, whether the trial can go forward given the situation on the ground, and also the readiness of the defense to try this incredibly sensitive case. It's essentially an international law being tried in a domestic, or as the defense have long contended, that they haven't had enough training.

Now in terms of the symbolic, it's at least equally important to the legal, because not just Iraqis but the world over is watching every one of these images that comes out of this courtroom. That's important to both to the judges, who have tried to maintain control, to underline the legitimacy of this process. But also to the defendants, not the least of which is Saddam Hussein himself, aware of the world and Iraqis see him every day in court.

To that end today, a defiant, confident, aggressive Saddam Hussein began the court session by speaking quite frankly to the presiding judge.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SADDAM HUSSEIN, FMR. PRES. OF IRAQ (through translator): Mr. Judge. I want you to order them. They are in our -- on our land. I will -- you have the servants. You are an Iraqi, and there are foreigners, and occupiers and invaders.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

RAMAN: And so, Miles, we expect at some point this hour for that delayed video feed to resume as the trial itself goes on -- Miles.

M. O'BRIEN: Aneesh, tell us about these documents. And I guess backing up here a little bit, we assume that the process is similar to what we have in the U.S., a discovery process, and that's what we're talking about. In other words, the defense attorneys are privy and allowed to see the evidence against their clients. RAMAN: Exactly. The defense has said, and they have yet to put it forward in court, that they want a three-month delay. Specifically, they say they have not seen the death certificates of the over 140 people allegedly executed by Saddam's regime back in 1982. They need proof of that, of those individuals. They also don't think they have the full amount of evidence. As you mentioned, this discovery process means the defense has to have access to everything that the prosecution has. They will contend that they do not have that. We're waiting for that petition to go forward. It will be interesting to see whether the judge does rule for another adjournment. All expectations are then we'll likely see three to four days of trial this week where witnesses will be testifying -- Miles.

M. O'BRIEN: Aneesh Raman, who's watching it every step of the way. And as soon as it gets back under way, we'll let you know about, of course -- Soledad.

S. O'BRIEN: Well, President Bush is talking about illegal immigration today in Arizona. It's an issue that's even divided some members of the president's own party. AMERICAN MORNING's Bob Franken is live for us at the White House this morning.

Hey, Bob. Good morning to you.

BOB FRANKEN, CNN CORRESPONDENT: Good morning.

Trial of Saddam Hussein Delayed; Severe Weather Hits in State After Stat

No even about it. The right flank of the party has long wanted to have very tough immigration laws, not satisfied with the president's proposals. The president is going to try to argue that his proposals combine the toughness that has been sought, along with a more enlightened guest-worker program. President Bush is going to be speaking in Tucson. You see the president here as he left the White House on Tuesday. He has been at the ranch in Crawford and is sort of meandering back with that stop in Arizona. The president is going to be telling his audience, both in the hall and on the right flank of the party that his program is tough. It combines new technology that will be involved in border patrolling. It also involves a program where those who are caught in the United States illegally will be sent to the interior parts of Mexico, making it more difficult of concern.

And then there is that part about the guest worker program. That, as the man said, is the rub. That is what has caused consternation among the conservatives. It would provide for a three- year guest worker visa, which then could be extended after an application. The worker then would have to return to his or her country before applying again. The business interests says that is needed to keep the economy going in the United States, but conservatives say that is a recipe for trouble -- Soledad.

S. O'BRIEN: So the speech on immigration. What about the war in Iraq? When are we going to hear from the president on that front?

FRANKEN: Well, we never know for certain, but of course the developments continue to dominate the news. We've been all witnessing the drama of the Saddam Hussein trial. There are the very disturbing reports of a plot to assassinate the judge, possible plot to assassinate the judge, and continued violence -- Soledad.

S. O'BRIEN: Bob Franken at the White House for us this morning. Bob, thanks.

CNN is going to carry the president's speech on border security and immigration. That's live today at 4:45 p.m. Eastern Time -- Miles.

M. O'BRIEN: Let's go now to Yakima, Washington and a daring jailbreak. We've been seeing a lot of stories like this the past couple of weeks, for some reason. Police catching seven escapees over the weekend, including a murder suspect. The hunt is still on for two others.

Anthony Gomes of our affiliate KNDO live now outside the Yakima County jail. That's about 150 miles from Seattle.

Anthony, hopefully everything is sealed up tight there this morning. Any leads?

ANTHONY GOMES, KNDO REPORTER: Yes, Miles, law enforcement here say that the public has been very helpful generating leads since this brazen breakout behind me Friday evening. Seven of those nine inmates that tried to break out have been caught. Two are still on the loose this morning.

They include 28-year-old Luis Soto. Law-enforcement officials say he's just over six feet tall and about 230 pounds. The 28-year- old wanted for residential burglary. Now, police think they are hot on his trail in the city of Topinish (ph). That's his hometown, about 15 miles southwest of here. They think they found a tent where he spent Friday night, and a storage shed he spent Saturday night. But law enforcement say they've missed him by just about an hour each time at each of those places.

The second man wanted this morning Gianni Alaimo. He's 5'9", 150 pounds according to police. The 26-year-old facing charges of second- degree assault. Law enforcement think that these two are not traveling together necessarily. Alaimo believed to be in Yakima.

But law enforcement is allowing following leads that say he has been spotted on his way to Seattle, or else possibly the U.S., Canadian or Mexican borders. So law enforcement saying that the public has been very helpful generating the leads, and asking the public to continue to do so until these two men are caught -- Miles.

O'BRIEN: Anthony, what do we know about how this escape occurred? Have they been able to piece it together?

GOMES: So far, what law enforcement is saying is that it seems that these nine inmates were all housed on the fourth floor behind me in what's called the maximum-security wing of the jailhouse, and they apparently dug a -- I guess cut out a hole from the ceiling, and then jumped up into the ceiling onto the roof, and then tied together bed sheets, just like in the movies. Several of them making it down to the ground, and to freedom, at least for now. M. O'BRIEN: At least for now. Anthony Gomes of Yakima, Washington. Our affiliate there KNDO, we thank you very much for that -- Soledad.

Trial of Saddam Hussein Delayed; Severe Weather Hits in State After Stat

S. O'BRIEN: Americans coast to coast may have a travel hangover this morning after the Thanksgiving weekend. For the millions who were trying to get home on Sunday, traditionally one of the year's busiest travel days, there was good and bad, but there was also tragedy.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: There was quite a few people screaming for help.

S. O'BRIEN (voice-over): Authorities in California say driver fatigue may have contributed to the fatal crash of a Greyhound bus on Sunday morning.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: I remembered the bus going off to the side, and the next thing I know, I'm picking my head off the window, pouring dirt off my ear.

S. O'BRIEN: The bus, headed from Los Angeles to San Francisco, ran off the road on Highway 101 near Santa Maria, killing two people, injuring dozens of others.

In Arizona, a crash involving a van killed two people on Interstate 17 north of Phoenix. Traffic was backed up for miles.

Meanwhile, blizzard conditions wreaked havoc on drivers in the Midwest as they tried to get home after the holidays. Winter storms shut down interstate 70 from outside Denver to the Kansas state line.

Rain tied up air traffic at one of the nation's busiest airports. Flights at Chicago O'Hare were delayed up to an hour and a half.

Elsewhere on what's typically one of the busiest travel days, it was pretty smooth sailing. And for that, people at New York's LaGuardia Airport were thankful.

ALFONSO GOMEZ, HOLIDAY TRAVELER: I came here two hours early because I think it was -- I thought it was going to be crowded, but it's not crowded.

SUE FELLING, HOLIDAY TRAVELER: Better than we thought.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: You sound surprised?

FELLING: Yes, we thought it would be a pretty big hassle, but so far, it's been pretty easy.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

S. O'BRIEN: The weather causing some travel delays in the south and the Midwest, too. A lot of tornadoes ripped through parts of Arkansas late last night, smacked right into a lumber yard and scattered wood and debris all over the interstate. One motorist was killed in the aftermath of the tornadoes.

The same line of tornadoes went through Kansas as well. Take a look at this. These are unbelievable pictures. More than 30 homes were damaged at Fort Riley. Lots of trees and power lines went down as well, and they're still down this morning. So far, though, a little bit of good news. There were no injuries reported.

(WEATHER REPORT)

M. O'BRIEN: Coming up, CNN exclusive, Lieutenant General Russel Honore will join us live. Now that his work in New Orleans is "over," as he would say, what does he think it will take to get the city back on its feet?

S. O'BRIEN: Looking forward to talking to him.

Also, more on the trial on Saddam Hussein. Will justice truly be served? We're going to ask two men who helped put the tribunal together.

M. O'BRIEN: Plus, taking the pulse on the economy a furious burst of holiday shopping. I'm confused, though, is it a furious burst, or is it tepid? I've read it would this ways this morning.

S. O'BRIEN: Well, one reporter said tepid, but it looks overall furious.

M. O'BRIEN: That's having it both ways, and we'll have more on that on AMERICAN MORNING. Why not? Let's have it both ways. Why not?

Trial of Saddam Hussein Delayed; Severe Weather Hits in State After Stat

M. O'BRIEN: We've got word from Baghdad, inside the Green Zone, that the Saddam Hussein trial has begun again after the lunch recess. That means we'll start seeing some pictures about 20 minutes from now, because it is about a 20-minute tape delay. So 7:30, 6:00 or so Eastern Time, we will bring that back to you. In the meantime, we'll be monitoring it, of course as it happens live.

Now Andy Serwer is here. A moment ago, we were talking about Vioxx and Merck, and there are some employees at Merck this morning who might be reaching some kind of prescription, because it's bad news.

ANDY SERWER, "FORTUNE" MAGAZINE: That's right, Miles. We anticipated this. This just crossing the tape right now. Merck announcing 7,000 jobs will be lost at the ailing pharmaceutical giant. That's out of a total of 63,000 worldwide. They're also going to be closing five plants out of 31 plants, closing or selling. Obviously, that's not good news for anyone there at all.

Want to talk a little bit about the holiday-shopping season, which of course kicked off right over this Thanksgiving weekend. And I guess you could say we got off to a perky start. The National Retail Federation...

M. O'BRIEN: Perky, not tepid?

SERWER: No, I would say it's perky, and I'll tell you why: National Retail Federation says up 22 percent from a year ago, \$28 billion dollars over the Thanksgiving weekend.

Here's the wrinkle, the stores in the middle, Miles, not faring so well. And this is a trend we've seen for the past couple of years. Discounters like Wal-Mart and Target doing pretty well, and on the high end companies like Saks and Tiffany's doing well. Coach -- this is bad news for you, Miles. Coach reporting they've sold out of their \$1,800 shearling jacket already.

M. O'BRIEN: Honey, I tried to get you...

SERWER: Soledad, or your wife, yes, I don't know who buys that for you.

Meanwhile, this morning, this is a new catch phrase in the retailing biz, "Cyber Monday." Today is a huge day for online shopping. Why is that? Because we all go back to work and shop at work. So, bosses, don't expect us to be too productive today, because so many of us will be going to Amazon and wal-mart.com and places like that, \$386 million spent on this day last year.

M. O'BRIEN: Is it really --it does boil down to a day? I mean, you think it just would happen...

SERWER: It happens all the time, but this is a big day, because people get back to work, and those high-speed Internet connections at work.

M. O'BRIEN: I always have the sense when you talk about Black Friday, now black Monday, it's just a way of retailers getting us kind of whipped into a frenzy.

SERWER: Juiced would be the word.

M. O'BRIEN: Juiced is the term, all juiced up.

SERWER: That's it.

M. O'BRIEN: All right, we'll try to get them tested later, I guess -- Soledad.

SERWER: Indeed.

S. O'BRIEN: All right, we're getting this just is into CNN now. From inside the courtroom, reports now that the Saddam Hussein trial has been delayed until December 5th. You'll recall now this will be the second delay since the trial began on October 19th. It was postponed for 40 days. Unclear now how long this trial will now be postponed for.

Let's get to Aneesh Raman. He's reporting for us from Baghdad and has been covering this trim all morning for us.

Aneesh, good morning.

ANEESH RAMAN, CNN CORRESPONDENT: Good morning, Soledad.

As you're well aware, we're on delay of sorts with the video. But information from within the courtroom saying, as you mentioned, that a further delay has been put in place by the judge for a week until December 5th. Now it's unclear at the moment why that delay was given by the judge. We know the defense was going into this trial, into today's ses-

Trial of Saddam Hussein Delayed; Severe Weather Hits in State After Stat

sion, requesting a three-month delay. They wanted more time to establish security for the defense lawyers, also to review the evidence. We did not hear in the morning session that petition actually go forward. It's unclear whether they perhaps handed it to the judge ahead of time, and he has simply ruled on that.

But at the end of the morning session, we were already hearing the first witness testimony on tape, a witness who has died since the October 19th session. He was interviewed shortly after, because he was critically ill, testifying in specifics about what happened in July 1982, the alleged massacre of over 140 village errs of Dujail after Saddam Hussein escaped an assassination attempt.

So just in from the court, and it's happening now in terms of the video coming out, is that this trial has now been adjourned for a second time for one week, until December 5th -- Soledad.

S. O'BRIEN: All right, and we should mention, Aneesh, that we are expecting to get the videotape from the court, obviously, as we are on a delay. We're going to get that videotape and bring it to you as soon as we get it. We're going to have more on this story, obviously. We're following it all morning.

A short break. We're back in just a moment.

S. O'BRIEN: We're just getting word that the trial of Saddam Hussein is now adjourned until next Monday. It's probably fair to say that very few courts have ever tried a bigger case.

Joining us to talk about this, from Cleveland, professor Michael Scharf, and at the CNN Center in Atlanta, professor Michael Newton. Both are legal advisers to the Saddam Hussein tribunal.

Nice to see you, gentlemen. Thanks for talking with us.

Professor Scharf, let's begin with you, if we can. We know now, and there are very few details at this point that we do know about this latest adjournment, but we do know it's adjourned until December 5th. The defense was looking for a three-month adjournment. Can you give me an educated guess on why a week but not more at this point?

MICHAEL SCHARF, CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIV.: Well, the defense was handed the case file by the investigative judge in August, so the defense actually has had now three months to go through this material. Instead of spending their time the last 40 days working on their motions, getting ready for cross-examination, they were on a boycott because of the security issues after one of the defense lawyers was killed. And apparently during the boycott, they got very little done. So now they are asking for more time, and the judge has given them a little, but not the three months that they've requested.

S. O'BRIEN: They may have gotten very little done, Professor Newton, but they apparently are also lacking from what sounds to me like the sort of basic discovery. They say a CD that has some witness testimony is unusable quality. They don't have any of the death certificates for people who they claim were killed in the Dujail massacre. Those don't sound necessarily like time wasters; they sound like things that they're missing?

MICHAEL NEWTON, VANDERBILT UNIV. LAW SCHOOL: They were given the full prosecutors package back in August, as Professor Scharf has said. The statute says that the defense is entitled to adequate time and facilities to prepare its defense. So if there are specific things that are missing, of course they're entitled to request them.

I think it's important to go back to what Judge Amin said when he opened trial this morning, that the best testimony to the attorneys who were -- to the defense attorneys who were killed in this case is to ensure a fair and public trial.

So if a week's delay is necessary to ensure a properly prepared defense, then that's perfectly appropriate, and it's within the court's discretion.

S. O'BRIEN: Gentlemen, we have Nic Robertson, who was inside the courtroom, joining us by phone now. Let's check in with him, see if there any more details about this adjournment that we can find out.

Nic, good morning.

NIC ROBERTSON, CNN SR. INTL. CORRESPONDENT: Good morning, Soledad.

Well, what appears to have happened, the judge called a recess for lunch. That lasted about an hour and 20 minutes. When he started that recess he said that the defendants could meet with the defense lawyers. And when we came back into the courtroom, when they filed back, came -- restarted the court session after lunch it had all of the appearances of a mini rebellion.

Trial of Saddam Hussein Delayed; Severe Weather Hits in State After Stat

Taha Yassin Ramadan, the former vice president in Iraq, stood up, and complained that he wasn't happy with the lawyers who were representing him. He said that since the last session, two of his lawyers had been shot, one of them killed. He said he had -- that his third lawyer had left the country, the lawyer who was wounded, had also left the country. And he questioned why an additional lawyer that he had asked for had not been brought to the court. And he said that he wasn't going to work with the court-appointed lawyers.

At which point, Saddam Hussein's half-brother stood up, Barzan Ibrahim Hassan, stood up and said, I'm in the same position of Taha Yassin Ramadan. They were my lawyers, too. I'm not going to work with the court-appointed lawyers.

And before the judge could even fully begin to respond to that, Mr. Awad Bandar, the former chief judge in Iraq, who sits next to Saddam Hussein in the trial in the courtroom here, then said that he wasn't going to proceed, he wasn't happy, because he and Saddam Hussein had received death threats in the courtroom.

Indeed, he said the person who had given him the death threats was still in the courtroom. So it had all of the trap-pings of the defendant coming out very strong after the lunch break.

What the judges decided to do is to adjourn until the 5th of December. Now the court is not fully adjourned at the moment. It is taking a short recess. But what the judge is going to do is allow Taha Yassin Ramadan and Barzan Ibrahim Hassan the opportunity to find the lawyers of their choice, and they have essentially until the 5th of December to do that.

S. O'BRIEN: Nic Robertson with an update of what's happening inside the courtroom there as an adjournment now in the Saddam Hussein case. Let's get back to our guests. Nic, thanks very much for the update.

Professor Scharf, who's with Case Western Reserve University, and is a legal adviser to the Hussein tribunal, and also professor Michael Newton. He's with Vanderbilt University Law School, and he's a legal adviser also to the Hussein tribunal.

Gentlemen, thanks for hanging, listening of course. Fascinating, I think, what we heard from Nic Robertson about this mini rebellion by the defendants who basically say my legal representation is not what I want. The goal was to avoid the appearance of a kangaroo court. Are they struggling with that in a very big way right now, Professor Scharf?

SCHARF: Well, yes, they are.

And let me tell you a story that you'll find interesting. About two weeks ago, I was at a conference at Georgetown, and one of Saddam Hussein's lawyers, Curtis Doebbler, approached me and said that the way to end the boycott was to get a message to the White House, and he asked if I would serve as a back channel to get that message through.

And what they said is they wanted three things. First of all, they wanted an independent investigation of who had actually assassinated the defense counsel. Secondly, they said that they wanted Ramsey Clark, Curtis Dabler, and the other high-powered foreign lawyers to be allowed to attend the trial so that they could help Dulaimi prepare the case. And thirdly, they said that they wanted to have the trial proceed with security for the defense counsel, not given by the government, but as independent security who are authorized to carry their own weapons.

Now the compromise was just worked out earlier this week, and the hope was that they would then progress, and that the defense counsel would play by the rules and things would go smoothly, but that's not the case about anything with respect to this trial. It's going to be a messy affair, and we're just seeing the tip of the iceberg today.

S. O'BRIEN: You know, you mentioned Ramsey Clark, so let's talk a little bit about him. He's the former U.S. attorney general.

Professor Newton, give me some insight into what into what Ramsey Clark can bring to the defense attorneys that he is now advising? I guess in a similar, but opposite way, in which you were advising the tribunal attorneys, right?

NEWTON: That's essentially correct. Ramsey Clark has said that the highest duty of the defense attorneys is to ensure that the trial moves forward in a fair and public way and that the defense is properly prepared and properly advocating on behalf of their clients. And, in fact, that's, I believe, what he's been asked to do.

These are complicated crimes from both standpoints. On the one hand is the factual issues and evidentiary issues associated with proving them. But on the other hand is the interface with the relevant body of international, criminal law. The substance of crimes against humanity that will emerge as trial progresses. He has been brought on board to help explain the international dimension of these international crimes.

Trial of Saddam Hussein Delayed; Severe Weather Hits in State After Stat

Remember that the elements of crimes here, which are the very detailed components that the prosecutors must prove in order to convict of any of these offenses, are drawn from the relevant body of international criminal law. This is a field with which the Iraqis were largely shielded during the Saddam era. And, in fact, the international expertise is directly relevant to help them learn the details of this particular body of law that has grown and evolved essentially over the last 10 to 15 years.

S. O'BRIEN: A huge learning curve really on both sides. Professor Michael Newton, thank you very much. Professor Michael Scharf, thank you very much. You know we're back again on December 5th talking about all of this as this trial moves along really at a snail's pace with lots of breaks. Thank you, gentlemen, I appreciate your time.

We continue, obviously, to monitor this. Interesting developments. To hear Nic Robertson's report of essentially a rebellion among the part of the defendants who are unhappy with their representation and refuse to move forward.

M. O'BRIEN: You know what's interesting is that timing, December 5th. You have parliamentary elections on December 15th and the trial will not go on in the midst of those elections. So interesting that they would set the timetable. I would look for this probably to delay even further. That would be my prediction right now.

S. O'BRIEN: Oh, absolutely. I think that that would be 100 percent likely.

CAROL COSTELLO, CNN ANCHOR: I think this might go on for years.

M. O'BRIEN: Yes. COSTELLO: It's sounding that way.

M. O'BRIEN: Look of Milosevic, right?

COSTELLO: That's right.

M. O'BRIEN: They continue that even as we speak.

S. O'BRIEN: Yes. You know, something else that's going to go on for years, if not decades, is the rebuilding in New Orleans. We've all spent time there. We've all seen just how bad it is. One man, who we've been talking about all morning, and who has really been on the front lines so to speak there, Lieutenant General Russel Honore. He is the guy who took charge in the chaotic days after Hurricane Katrina. Today he's back at his previous job, training National Guards and Reserve troops for Afghanistan and Iraq. Lieutenant General Russel Honore joins us from CNN Center.

Sir, nice to see you. Thanks for talking with us this morning.

LT. GEN. RUSSEL HONORE, U.S. ARMY: Good morning.

S. O'BRIEN: Let's begin with your work now. Right now you're back to what you were doing before you took your break from helping out in New Orleans where you were essentially, I guess, helping to train the troops to be mobilized to Iraq and Afghanistan. There has been so much debate, as you well know, about pulling out of Iraq right now. How does that affect the National Guard troops that you deal with on a daily basis?

HONORE: Well, our troops are focused. We train seven days a week. We have the 134 brigade from Minnesota currently training at Camp Shelby. It's approximately 4,000 men and women combat infantry brigade. They are focused on their mission. They know what they have to do. And currently serving in Iraq we have the 48th brigade right here from Georgia, which we trained. We have the 155 brigade from Mississippi and the 228 brigade from Pennsylvania that's currently serving with distinction in Iraq. I often speak to those commanders almost on a monthly, sometimes weekly basis, getting updates from how their troops are doing. Their troops that are forward deploy are confident, competent and they're making things happen and Iraq is getting better every day as a result of their efforts.

S. O'BRIEN: So the national debate . . .

HONORE: I just got a back brief from the 278 brigade from Tennessee. They just redeployed. We've done extensive debriefings with them. They were up on the border with Iraq and Iran. And the 42nd Infantry Division, the first National Guard division, has been deployed since Korean and World War II just redeployed. And all the debriefs show that our soldiers from the National Guard and Reserves have measured themselves well and they're focused on their mission just as the rest of the formation in Iraq, in Afghanistan. Over.

S. O'BRIEN: So it sounds as if you're saying the national debate that's raging on here isn't really affecting those who are serving over there.

Trial of Saddam Hussein Delayed; Severe Weather Hits in State After Stat

I'd be curious to know. There are many questions, as you know, about the number of tours potentially when you consider the troop levels in Iraq. Right now there are people who are doing second tours and third tours in Iraq. That could go, some speculate, to fourth tours and fifth tours in Iraq. What do you make that have?

HONORE: Well, there's some concern about that. We watch that close in the Army and in the Department of Defense. We're getting everybody into the fight. But what is indicative and one of the performance measures we look at is, what is the re-enlistment rate of those young warriors. And their reenlisting at a very high rate. And it's indicative of the fact -- they recognize they've got an important mission. That mission is being accomplished and Iraq is getting better every day. And, look, Iraq is in great hands. You've got General Abizaid, General Casey, General Webster, General Turner over there with the 101st and General Thurman going over soon. They know what they're doing. They are competent commanders. Their troops are focused. They're making things happen. And Iraq is getting better every day. Over.

S. O'BRIEN: Talk to me about your first impressions when you arrived on the ground in New Orleans, because you were the guy in charge, brought in to help salvage a deteriorating situation. Give me a description of your gut reaction when you got on the ground.

HONORE: I'm sorry, ma'am.

S. O'BRIEN: You want me to repeat that for you?

HONORE: I got equipment malfunction here.

S. O'BRIEN: We have those occasionally here at CNN. I'll repeat that for you, sir.

I want you to describe your gut reaction when you got boots on the ground in New Orleans and you saw what we all saw, just how bad it was. Describe for me what you felt.

HONORE: Well, I saw a lot of people who needed help. We all did. The National Guard on the ground led by the General Lamdino (ph) and his team were marshalling the logistics, as well as bringing in reinforcement National Guard from throughout the United States, which was to itself a great success. I saw search and rescue teams being deployed and the coast guard leading the effort in the helicopter search and rescue. All of those teams were working well together. What we did collectively with the General Lamdino and the head of the Coast Guard, Admiral Duncan, was to refocus and make sure everybody had good priority of work and working together with General Lamdino and the first responders was to get it focused.

Now, what we saw, to answer to your question, was a lot of people living in some very tough conditions in and around the Superdome and at the convention center. And then the logistics problem. As you know, the Superdome was surrounded by four to five feet of water and those residents of New Orleans who lived in that condition know that was very hard times. But my hat go off to the people who were in those conditions because they tried to take care of one another and showed a lot of resilience in some very trying time until a rescue was completed. And a lot of that credit go to the coast guard, the National Guard, and the first responders from throughout America who came and put their life on the line to try and get those citizens out of there. Over.

M. O'BRIEN: General Honore, it's Miles O'Brien here. A question for you about your unexpected fame. Are you comfortable with it? I imagine you get stopped a lot as you walk through airports and so forth. You had dinner at the White House with Prince Charles and Camilla. We're dying to know how that was. That must have been a fascinating conversation. What's that ancillary aspect of all this been like for you?

HONORE: Well, it gives us an opportunity to tell the warrior story about our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marine and I only represent them. Anything that has been focused on me has been, as a result of the work of those soldiers, sailors, airmen, marine, and coast guard men who do their job, day in and day out around the world, defending America.

COSTELLO: General Honore . . .

HONORE: And I'm pleased to represent them. Over.

COSTELLO: General Honore, you are so gracious and so modest. This is Carol Costello. I wanted to ask you, I have heard people -- they've come up to me and said, you know General Honore, he might make a great president maybe. I mean, have people come up to you and said things like that?

HONORE: I think those are all in good humor. I'm focused on being the general.

COSTELLO: Oh, come on. What have they said to you? What have they said to you, general?

Trial of Saddam Hussein Delayed; Severe Weather Hits in State After Stat

HONORE: I am the commander of the first army and that is -- my hands are full with that right now as we train troops for Iraq and Afghanistan. And that's my number one mission. We'll stay focused on that. As we extend our prayers and well wishes to those Americans who have been displaced.

But I heard your question, but I'm very comfortable being a first army commander. Over.

M. O'BRIEN: Well, yes, but are you a political -- are you registered with any particular party? Are you a political creature? Is that . . .

S. O'BRIEN: Could there (INAUDIBLE) run one day?

COSTELLO: Yes.

HONORE: I'm a member of the United States Army and I'm proud to be a soldier.

S. O'BRIEN: Hey, final question for you, sir, before we let you go. Is New Orleans going to be able to rebuild to what it once was, do you think, if you had to guess? What does your gut say?

HONORE: Oh, absolutely. And New Orleans will build better. I mean we've seen areas devastated at the level New Orleans was devastated, as well as Mississippi Gulf Coast. Both of those areas were destroyed. Along Biloxi, all the way through New Orleans, Jefferson Parish, St. Bernard Parish. And I've had -- doing a little study of history and reflecting back on areas that have been devastated by war. While this was not a war, the instate was the same. And you could look at areas around the world that were devastated and all of those places have come back stronger and New Orleans will, Gulf Coast of Mississippi will. Their leadership is focused. All of them have picked the best brains in the states of Mississippi and Louisiana to help them plan this at the state and national level.

It's going to take time, though, because this is not an instant solution. This storm came within 24 hours and couple of weeks later, a second storm came. The enormity of the damage is beyond belief, as you saw it, the world has seen it, and our patience and prayers go out for those people who were affected. And the governments there are doing the best they can to get this recovery done.

But it's going to take time. If any of you have ever built a house or asked builders to come do an addition, you know that's an enormous process. Now you're talking about doing it for hundreds of thousands of people. Over.

S. O'BRIEN: Yes. And we're over, too, sir.

M. O'BRIEN: Over and out, yes.

S. O'BRIEN: Lieutenant General Russel Honore, nice to see you. I hope we get to continue to check in with you throughout the next couple of . . .

M. O'BRIEN: A big salute (INAUDIBLE).

S. O'BRIEN: You guys love that. They're saluting you, sir. I'm not sure you can see that.

Thank you for being with us. Appreciate it.

HONORE: Good day.

S. O'BRIEN: You, too.

COSTELLO: I loved how he said over at the end of each answer. Made it easier for us.

S. O'BRIEN: And, you know, he's definitely going to be a politician one day because I can tell by the way he dodges the question. M. O'BRIEN: Yes, he did a nice job dodging that, didn't he?

S. O'BRIEN: It was so smooth. I said, oh, there you go. Yes.

M. O'BRIEN: And actually, here, can we take this picture, Michael. Can we get that picture right now.

S. O'BRIEN: He'll be president . . .

M. O'BRIEN: Take that picture. What's beautiful about it was, look at this. Look at the shot right now. He was talking while they were doing all that stuff to him in his earpiece and never missed a beat. I'm telling you, he's going all the way.

S. O'BRIEN: Oh, yes.

M. O'BRIEN: All right.

S. O'BRIEN: Still to come on AMERICAN MORNING, gosh, you know, there are so many people who have food allergies, like allergies to peanuts. But there are some extreme risks we're going to tell you about. Children are often the most susceptible. We'll talk to a doctor about one of the most common dangers just ahead.

M. O'BRIEN: It's amazing how allergic people can be to that.

Also, Andy Serwer will be along with an interesting new use for your Tivo. Of course, we don't want to spoil the surprise. We'll just say it definitely gives you a break.

S. O'BRIEN: It's a babysitter?

M. O'BRIEN: It's a babysitter. Wow, now that's something we want to get. That's ahead on AMERICAN MORNING.

S. O'BRIEN: Medical news now. A terrible report out of Canada to tell you about. A 15-year-old girl in Canada died after kissing her boyfriend. She had a peanut allergy. He had just eaten peanut butter. Dr. Hugh Sampson is a professor of pediatrics at Mt. Sinai School of Medicine in New York.

Nice to see you, sir.

What a bizarre case and what an awful case. How unusual is that scenario?

DR. HUGH SAMPSON, MT SINAI SCHOOL OF MEDICINE: To have a fatal reaction from kissing somebody is very unusual. However, there have been a couple of studies looking at how often that kind of event takes place where someone does develop a reaction. There was a study from California showing that 5 percent of individuals in a peanut and tree nut registry indicated that they had had some kind of reaction from kissing someone. Often times being just some mild swelling of the face. And then there was another study actually in Europe that was even larger that suggested perhaps 10 percent of patients with a peanut or tree nut allergy had some kind of reaction after kissing someone.

S. O'BRIEN: When I was in school, you never heard of anybody with any kind of nut allergy. Now, in my children's school, of course, no one is allowed to bring nuts into the school in any way, shape, or form. Is this something that's growing and why?

SAMPSON: It certainly appears to be growing. We did a study at Mt. Sinai looking -- doing a national survey looking at how frequent peanut and tree allergy is. We did a study in '97 and then again in 2002. And in that five-year time period, we found that peanut allergy doubled in the children under the age of five. So it clearly is getting much greater. Why it's getting more frequent, we're not entirely sure. We think it has something to do with the type of peanut we eat. We eat a dry roasted peanut, which tends to be more allergenic or more likely to cause allergy than peanuts say eaten in Asia where they often will eat boiled or fried peanuts.

S. O'BRIEN: If an attack is triggered or if you're highly allergic, you say the most important thing to do is to have some kind of a plan. What do you suggest? What do you tell your patients?

SAMPSON: Right. We will always give the patient a written plan about the kind of symptoms they may expect to see. We arm them with epinephrine or adrenaline auto injectors so that when they start to get symptoms, they would give themselves an injection right away. Also to call 911 and get help.

S. O'BRIEN: The problem doesn't seem to be that people don't recognize the symptoms, whether it's swelling or turning red. I mean I've seen actually a number of these symptoms. The problem seems to be being able to identify the food that might have peanuts or peanut oil in it, because often it's not even labeled.

SAMPSON: Right. It's very tough, especially when you go to restaurants, you go to buffets, you go to parties, things are made and ingredients get mixed. And even sometimes in the labeling it gets very difficult to see where you might be encountering peanut.

S. O'BRIEN: Are there ways to help prevent peanut allergies in children or is it just sort of a crap shoot, you get it or you don't?

SAMPSON: We're not really sure, unfortunately. We do recommend that if you come from a family where there's a lot of allergy, that the mother avoid peanuts while breast feeding. This is something also recommended by the American

Academy of Pediatrics. Whether this is the best way to go, we don't know at this time but evidence that we have suggests that that's one thing that we can be doing.

S. O'BRIEN: What do you advise people? I mean, obviously, you can protect your child within your own home and you probably can do a decent job within the school. But out in the world, it's hard. It's really hard.

SAMPSON: Yes. That's where it really gets hard. And basically you have to try to teach the children, the patients that have this, to avoid any situation where it may be risky.

S. O'BRIEN: Oh, which is almost every situation when it comes to food that's not labeled.

SAMPSON: Right.

S. O'BRIEN: Scary stuff but an interesting information.

Dr. Hugh Sampson from Mt. Sinai School of Medicine. Nice to see you, doctor. Thank you.

SAMPSON: Thank you.

S. O'BRIEN: Miles.

M. O'BRIEN: Let's get another check of the weather now. Jacqui Jeras at the CNN Center with that.

Good morning again, Jacqui.

(WEATHER REPORT)

M. O'BRIEN: Andy Serwer's here "Minding Your Business." What's up?

ANDY SERWER, CNN CORRESPONDENT: I'm going to ask you a question, Miles. Would you Tivo a TV commercial? We'll tell you about a new business model coming up on AMERICAN MORNING.

M. O'BRIEN: Yes, the Motown sound. Barry Gordy there.

SERWER: That wasn't Ed Harris.

M. O'BRIEN: No, that wasn't Ed Harris.

S. O'BRIEN: That would be the black guy before Ed Harris.

SERWER: (INAUDIBLE) sorry. Just to be clear.

S. O'BRIEN: No.

M. O'BRIEN: All right. Well, let's, you know, a lot of times at home these days I say to myself, self, I'd like to see a few more commercials. I'm not seeing enough, I'm Tivoing too much and I'm missing those commercials. I love . . .

S. O'BRIEN: You need to get out more, self. You need to get a life.

M. O'BRIEN: Self and his commercials that pay the paycheck. Let's watch them, right?

SERWER: They're paying the (INAUDIBLE), right. You've got to -- that's the important thing here. M. O'BRIEN: Yes.

SERWER: This is a new business model that, well, has us rolling our eyebrows I guess this morning a little bit. Tivo is creating a service that will let consumers search for TV ads. And, of course, this is ironic since Tivo is a DVR that records shows and most people use it to skip the commercials. And I think it really shows how intense, perhaps desperate, advertisers are to keep commercial relevant.

Here is how it would work. You would register through your Tivo for categories of commercials that you'd want to be saved. In other words, say you want to start looking for cruises, so you look -- save for cruise line commercials or cars. And the Tivo would store them up.

M. O'BRIEN: Or just the annoying ones.

SERWER: Well, that would be -- yes, I mean maybe you'd want to do this on the Super Bowl where some people actually think commercials are cool and then save them and look through them. But otherwise, I mean this is just an-

other attempt to try to figure out this new way of, you know, watching TV whenever you want to and having advertisers support it or having your subscription model.

S. O'BRIEN: I don't think it's going to work.

SERWER: I don't think it's going to work either.

S. O'BRIEN: Because if you really want to go on a cruise, you'd go online or go to your travel agent to get information. The commercials are not really what educate you about cruises. They sort of make -- peak your interest.

SERWER: Peak your interest, right.

S. O'BRIEN: So it's kind of going about it the wrong way.

SERWER: Yes, or compared to the Internet where you can have an endless amount of . . .

S. O'BRIEN: I'm not an advertising executive, so I may be wrong.

SERWER: That story in "The Wall Street Journal." I should mention by the way.

M. O'BRIEN: Give credit where credit is due.

SERWER: Yes, indeed.

M. O'BRIEN: All right.

S. O'BRIEN: Well, you know, it's cyber Monday.

SERWER: Yes. S. O'BRIEN: That means that online retailers are expecting lots of holiday shoppers today online. Why? Because we're all back at work where we have much better Internet connections.

SERWER: Yes.

S. O'BRIEN: Much faster.

SERWER: Speedy.

S. O'BRIEN: And lots of time in which to waste at work.

SERWER: Sorry, boss.

M. O'BRIEN: Be careful in your cubical today. We've notified the boss.

S. O'BRIEN: We're going to take a look at some of the deep discounts out there. Want to do that right before you head to work so you're really armed and loaded for the rest of the day.

SERWER: Armed and ready not to work.

S. O'BRIEN: That's ahead on AMERICAN MORNING. Stay with us.

S. O'BRIEN: Good morning. I'm Soledad O'Brien. A developing story in Iraq where co-defendants in the Saddam Hussein trial have now forced another delay. We're going to take you live to Baghdad, find out just what happened.

M. O'BRIEN: I'm Miles O'Brien. A controversial plan on the president's agenda today. We're talking tough about boarder security but his plan for temporary workers could draw heat from Republicans.

S. O'BRIEN: And severe weather tears through parts of the country. Take a look at this. Tornadoes touched down in the south and the Midwest, while snow out west leaves travelers looking for some relief on this AMERICAN MORNING.

TO ORDER A VIDEO OF THIS TRANSCRIPT, PLEASE CALL 800-CNN-NEWS OR USE OUR SECURE ONLINE ORDER FORM LOCATED AT www.fdch.com

LOAD-DATE: November 29, 2005