

Students react to Pledge case

BY JAMIE DOWNS
THE GAMECOCK

USC students are sounding off on the Pledge of Allegiance, which is the center of a controversy surrounding the latest battle over separation of church and state.

"America is a nation with people from all across the world, and it's not fair for us to make them say something they don't believe in," said Jeannette Fulton, a first-year undeclared student.

California atheist Michael Newdow agrees. Last week, Newdow stood before the United States Supreme Court and argued that the phrase "under God" should be removed from the Pledge.

Already in a custody battle with the mother of his daughter,

Newdow claims that by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance his daughter is being forced to take an oath on something she doesn't believe in.

The phrase has been a part of American culture since 1954, but people like Newdow say the phrase "under God" has become out-of-place.

Devon Johnson, a second-year computer information systems student, said the pledge is a matter of free will.

"The Pledge of Allegiance is not something that everyone in America is required to do," Johnson said. "In most cases, you do not have to recite it if you choose not to."

Andy Siegel, an assistant law professor at USC, said there are a lot of strong points to Newdow's

case. "A pledge is something where you assert your belief publicly," he said. But in the Pledge of Allegiance, "you are asked to confirm a series of beliefs, including a belief in God, and to some this comes close to prayer."

Even though Siegel said Newdow makes a good argument, he said Newdow's chances of winning are very slim. He said the Supreme Court will probably rule against him because he is bringing the case to them on "narrow grounds" and the religious implications of the Pledge of Allegiance are so minimal they should not be tampered with. He added that the Supreme Court has always said the reference to God on coins and in the Pledge of Allegiance isn't a major issue, be-

cause it reflects the nation's history.

The phrase "under God" was added to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954 by Congress, allowing the Pledge to stand both as an oath to our nation and as a public prayer. Monica Phillips, a first-year psychology student, disagreed with Newdow.

"There is no point in taking it out," she said. She added that the Pledge represents what America was founded on: equality, liberty, justice and a strong belief in God. She also said that "God" in the Pledge doesn't have to represent the Christian God.

"God" in this sense means whoever your god may be," she said.

Comments on this story? E-mail gamecocknews@gwm.sc.edu



PHOTO BY MORGAN FORD, THE GAMECOCK

Students in classrooms across the country pledge allegiance to the American flag. The phrase "under God" is under scrutiny.

Statue of Liberty's pedestal to reopen for summer visitors

BY TIMOTHY WILLIAMS
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Access to the Statue of Liberty, which has been closed since the September 11 terrorist attacks, will be relaxed beginning this summer, although tourists will still not be allowed inside the statue itself.

Pledges of \$7 million in donations, including a \$100,000 gift from Mayor Michael Bloomberg,

will finance upgrades that were necessary before the monument could be reopened.

Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton said Tuesday that the observation deck on the statue's pedestal will be reopened sometime in late July.

Currently, tourists can visit Liberty Island but are not allowed inside the 151-foot statue or its pedestal.

"This impressive monument

has always been a beacon for our shores," said Norton. "Unfortunately, she has also been a symbol of the darker forces of terrorism before and after September 11."

Bloomberg, who joined Norton at a news conference on the island, said he was "proud to have played such a small role" in getting the statue more available to the public.

Norton said an examination of

the 118-year-old national monument in New York Harbor revealed potential fire problems and a lack of exits. Security screening procedures, much like those at airports, will be implemented along with a reservation system to reduce long lines.

After the upgrades are completed, the public will be allowed to enjoy the panoramic view from the observation deck at the top of the pedestal, about 16 stories

above ground. They will no longer be allowed into the crown, reached via narrow and winding stairs, because it cannot accommodate large numbers of tourists and does not meet local fire, building or safety codes.

The island was closed for 100 days after Sept. 11, 2001. Airport-type metal detectors were installed to screen visitors boarding the ferry from lower Manhattan, and the island was reopened in

December 2001. The statue itself has remained closed.

Since the terrorist attacks, officials have said the number of visitors to Liberty Island has dropped by 40 percent. Still, more than 4 million people have visited since then.

The upgrade project is being overseen by the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation. The statue had undergone a major restoration for its 100th birthday in 1986.

Death toll climbs to 42 in Uzbekistan amid gunfire, explosions

BY BURT HERMAN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TASHKENT, UZBEKISTAN — Gunfire and explosions resounded in the capital Tuesday as Uzbek forces battled for hours with suspected Islamic militants after two more suicide attacks. Officials claimed 20 terrorists and three police died in the fighting.

The bloodshed brought the death toll to 42 in three days of violence, the government said — the most serious unrest in the country since Uzbekistan let hundreds of U.S. troops use a base near the Afghan border after the Sept. 11 attacks. All of this week's attacks appeared to target Uzbek authorities.

The clashes Tuesday were centered in the Yalangach neighborhood, just outside the city limits off the road heading to the official home of President Islam Karimov. The Interior Ministry said in an

statement read on state-run TV that 20 terrorists and three police were killed in the confrontations that began about 7:20 a.m., while five other police were wounded.

The statement didn't say how long the operation lasted, but witnesses indicated explosions and shooting went on for at least several hours.

The clashes began with a pair of suicide bombings.

Police stopped a small car, and two alleged terrorists jumped out and detonated explosive-laden belts, killing themselves and three police and wounding five more officers.

Down the road, a woman detonated explosives after refusing to heed police orders to stop approaching a bus.

The suicide bomber was decapitated in the blast, said Hairniso Supiyeva, 64, whose front gate was pitted with shrapnel from the explosion.

Three black-clad women who had been in a car with the bomber fled to a nearby apartment building, where police then began a nearly five-hour standoff with them and other suspects.

An Interior Ministry officer said 16 suspected terrorists — 11 men and five women — were killed in the apartment building. Some were shot by police but

others killed themselves with grenades, said the officer, who refused to give his name. His comments contradicted the Interior Ministry statement, and the bodies on the sidewalk also appeared intact and not torn apart by an explosion.

Five men escaped, said a building resident who refused to give her name. She said the women in

the car wore veils revealing only their eyes, rare attire in secular Uzbekistan. She said they were speaking another Central Asian language she could not understand.

The people had moved into an apartment in the four-story building in January, the resident said, adding that a young man who spoke Uzbek with an accent signed

the rent agreement. She didn't know how many people lived there, saying they spent their days elsewhere and returned in the evenings.

It was unclear whether the four were among the 16 the Interior Ministry officer reported killed in the siege.

Nineteen people were killed and 26 wounded Sunday and Monday.

Saddam keeping quiet during U.S. questioning

BY KATHERINE PFLEGER
SHRADER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — He doesn't have a lawyer in the room, but Saddam Hussein apparently is practicing what most attorneys would advise: Don't talk. Diplomatic and military officials say the former Iraqi leader has provided little useful information in interrogations so far — and may even be having fun.

The questioning of Saddam — initially handled by the CIA — is now a joint CIA-FBI operation, a sign that the aim is changing from finding intelligence to gathering evidence for any eventual trials.

The people who are asking the questions at the moment are from the FBI, said a U.S. intelligence official, speaking on the condition of anonymity.


Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has indicated in interviews that interrogators aren't learning much from the former president of Iraq.

In a recent interview, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage said he occasionally sees the interrogation briefing reports. "He's a pretty wily guy, and he's not giving much information that I've seen. But he seems to be enjoying the debate," Armitage told WPHT-AM radio in Philadelphia.

When Saddam was captured, haggard in an underground room in December, officials hoped the interrogation would yield details about the Iraqi insurgency, Saddam's weapons programs, human rights violations and corruption in the U.N. oil-for-food program.


In an interview with The Associated Press last week, FBI Director Robert Mueller said the FBI is assisting with "certain interrogations" in Iraq, as well as helping with investigations into killings there.

Details of the interrogations could come out in any eventual trial of Saddam. But the logistics — including the date — of any trial have yet to be settled.



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