

TRANSCRIPTS

[Transcript Providers](#)

Shows By Category:

[Return to Transcripts main page](#)

AMERICAN MORNING

New Ambassador; Secret Meeting?; Marine Massacre?; Graduation Politics; Alligator Anxiety

Aired May 30, 2006 - 07:30 ET

THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT. THIS COPY MAY NOT BE IN ITS FINAL FORM AND MAY BE UPDATED.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN, CNN ANCHOR: This morning says you may be paying more for rent this year. The expected hike is more than 5 percent. That's twice as much as last year and the biggest increases since 2000. Good morning. Welcome back, everybody. I'm Soledad O'Brien.

MILES O'BRIEN, CNN ANCHOR: And I'm Miles O'Brien. Thanks for being with us.

Iraq moves one step closer to having a bona fide government today. It is installing a new ambassador to the United States. President Bush will be presented with the credentials later this morning. White House Correspondent Ed Henry live now from the White House with more.

Ed, good morning.

ED HENRY, CNN CORRESPONDENT: Good morning, Miles.

We're expecting the president to make some comments on Iraq following on what he said yesterday when he laid a wreath at Arlington National Cemetery to mark Memorial Day. The president said the foundation for democracy is being formed in Iraq and that the heavy sacrifice is worth it. And today receiving those credentials from the new Iraqi ambassador to the United States, Samir Sumaidaie, gives the president a chance to highlight progress in Iraq. But that ceremony, of course, comes one day after the bloodiest day in Iraq since the formation of a new government, including the death of those two CBS journalists you just mentioned. Amid all of the violence yesterday, the president delivered a short speech in which he said the nation must stay the course in Iraq.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GEORGE W. BUSH, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: Our nation is free because of brave Americans like these who volunteer to confront our adversaries abroad so we do not have to face them here at home. Our nation mourns the loss of our men and women in uniform. We will honor them by completing the mission for which they gave their lives, by defeating the terrorists, by advancing the cause of liberty and by laying the foundation of peace for a generation of young Americans.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

HENRY: An interesting note is that the new Iraqi ambassador had previously demanded an investigation into the killing of his own 21-year-old cousin in Iraq. The ambassador has alleged that his cousin was shot by U.S. Marines about a year ago. Obviously coming on the heels of these allegations in Haditha, a completely unrelated incident. But given those allegations flying around right now and the current U.S. investigation, you can bet that could make this meeting a bit interesting.

SERVICES

- [E-mails](#)
- [RSS](#)
- [Podcasts](#)
- [Mobile](#)
- [CNN Pipeline](#)

Miles.

MILES O'BRIEN: Ed, the king of Jordan came yesterday. And who knew?

HENRY: We didn't.

MILES O'BRIEN: Talk about stealthy visit. That was very interesting. Tell us about that and why was it so quite?

HENRY: Well, it's interesting. The stated reason is, obviously following on the new Israeli prime minister's meeting with the president here at the White House last week, that King Abdullah was trying to push along Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. Trying to stress to President Bush how important that is right now in the region.

But quite interesting, as you noted, that was not officially on the White House schedule. In fact that the president was having dinner with King Abdullah or that Vice President Cheney met with the king yesterday. You can bet a lot of eyebrows being raising about that, why that was kept secret and we're trying to get that answer right now.

Miles.

MILES O'BRIEN: Ed Henry, maybe it's secret. Who knows. We'll find out. Thank you very much.

Soledad.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: Murder charges could be coming for several U.S. Marines. That's what some members of Congress are being told about the investigation into last year's suspected massacre in Haditha, Iraq. Here's what Joint Chief Chairman General Peter Pace told Miles yesterday on AMERICAN MORNING.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GENERAL PETER PACE, CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF: If the allegations as they are being portrayed in the newspaper turn out to be valid, then, of course, there'll be charges. But we don't know yet what the outcome will be. It'll take its course, it will be made public and we'll all be able to make our own judgments.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: Pennsylvania Representative John Murtha spent 37 years in the Marines. He retired in 1990 as a colonel. He's been briefed on the investigation. He's in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, this morning.

Congressman, nice to see you. Thanks for talking with us.

REP. JOHN MURTHA, (D) PENNSYLVANIA: Good morning, Soledad.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: You have said that you believe that, in fact, there was a cover up. How high do you think this goes, sir?

MURTHA: Well, Soledad, this is what worries me. We're fighting a war about America's ideals and democracies ideas and something like this happens and they try to cover it up. They knew the day after this happened that it was not as they portrayed it. They knew that they went into the rooms, they killed the people in the taxi. There was no firing at all. And this comes from the highest authority in the Marine Corps. So there's no question in my mind. And I don't know how. That's what we have to find out.

This is the type of thing that makes it so difficult. We're supposed to be fighting this war for democracy and yet something like this happens that sets us back. It's as bad as Abu Ghraib, if not worse. It's the kind of things that hearts and minds of people that 80 percent of the Iraqis want us out of there and 47 percent say it's OK to Americans.

Something like this happens, they knew about it, the Iraqis knew about it, the Americans pay them and then it goes up the chain of command and somebody stifles it. If it hadn't been for "Time" magazine in March, this would have never became public and it's something that should have become public immediately. We should have said, this is not something the Americans do.

It breaks my heart to think Marines did something like this. And when you hear some of the stories now that are coming out, it just makes it worse than ever.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: Yes, you know, when you listen to the reporters from "Time" magazine, they say that they were waved off their investigation for their reporting early on, being told that, you know, essentially what they were hearing was propaganda, anybody who is claiming a massacre. If "Time" had not continued to dig, do you believe that, in fact, this may have never come out?

MURTHA: Well, I'll tell you how bad it was. The officials -- high level officials told me just last week it will be two months before this is over. The reason I've been speaking out is Iraqis know about this. This has been all through Iraq. There's no question about it. They paid people \$1,500 to \$2,5000. This doesn't happen unless it comes at the highest

authority. I don't know how high . . .

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: When you say paid people, you're talking an about the military compensating the families, the victims, is what you mean, right?

MURTHA: Yes. And that doesn't happen, Soledad, if it's an explosive device. Now I understand the troops. Troops doing a tremendous job. They carry 70 pounds of equipment. They're out there every day. An IED goes off, it kills somebody one day, the next day.

Some of them have seen 25 and 30 of those go off and they haven't been wounded, like the reporter that was hit. She's been out there day after day and finally it gets to them. The pressure is tremendous. We don't have enough troops over there and they don't know what their mission is. Their mission is to find IEDs.

So the pressure -- I don't excuse it. There's no way you can excuse it. But on the other hand, I understand exactly what's happening with the troops. Think're doing everything they can do. But for the Marines to do something like this has got to be punished as quickly as possible so the world understands that we don't condone something like this.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: There are people who have said it's -- there's a comparison here that can be made to my lie. Do you think that's true?

MURTHA: Well, I think it's just as bad, if not worst than that. And my lie, if I remember the circumstances, you're out in the field and they killed civilians but they used the excuse that they looked like they were the enemy. Here there was no shots fired. There was no enemy action at all. A taxi drives up, they kill everybody in the taxi and then they go into homes and pull the people out. And the stories keep getting worse and worse.

And then they try to cover it up saying they were killed by an IED to confuse the message. They're still trying to confuse the message. There's no way you can confuse something like this. You just get the facts out, you get them out as quickly as you can and so . . .

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: What do you mean by -- forgive me for interrupting you, but what do you mean by they're still trying to confuse the message?

MURTHA: Well, just like today I was talking to Charlie Johnson (ph) at ABC News. He said, well the military says this and the military says that. Look, this happened six months ago. This happened November 19th. They knew the day after what had happened. So they keep spinning it to try to make it look like it was something that happened during action.

This is -- they keep saying well invest -- six months, Soledad, this has been going on. We've got to get it out. We've got to get it over with. We have to make the troops -- and I give General Hagee, the commandant of the Marine Corp, credit. He's over there right now telling the troops, we've got to protect non-combatants. The rules of engagement insist that you don't fire unless you're in danger. And I understand the pressure the troops are under, but that's not the point. The point is, we can't let something like this go on.

And then there's another incident which is very similar to it. And now, from what I've just heard on your program, even another one that happened a year ago. So the troops -- a corpsman worked in or talked to a NPR, he says, well we're fighting terrorists. We can't lower our standards to the terrorists' level. We lose worldwide support. We've already lost the hearts and minds of Iraqi. It's time for us to redeploy, get our troops out of the is middle of a civil war.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: Congressman John Murtha. Thanks for joining us, Congressman. Appreciate it.

Miles.

MILES O'BRIEN: It's college graduation time all across the country. Seniors are putting on their caps and gowns and they're sitting down for some words of wisdom. They just hope it won't be too long, right? CNN's Candy Crowley tells us that some of those graduation day speaker have their own political future in mind when they address the graduates.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

CANDY CROWLEY, CNN CORRESPONDENT, (voice over): Cue (ph) is a small liberal arts college about 1,200 miles, two plane rides away from Boston. And yet, there he is, the governor of Massachusetts, commencement speaker at Cue College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where presidential campaigns begin. Lucky he was passing through.

GOV. MITT ROMNEY, (R) MASSACHUSETTS: I think it's more than just a coincidence. That you're going to see a lot of leading Republicans come to Iowa over the next couple of years just to say hello.

CROWLEY: Welcome to the transection of graduation '06 and election '08, a spot to track the travels and travails of potential presidential candidates.

SEN. JOHN MCCAIN, (R) ARIZONA: I supported the decision to go to war in Iraq. Many Americans did not.

CROWLEY: The liberals' favorite conservative was out of favor at the liberal news school in New York where he talked largely about the need for debate without hate.

MCCAIN: Offer no worthy summons to the world.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: We're graduating, not voting.

CROWLEY: Different moods, same speech at Liberty University where McCain's words were heard as an attempt to patch up a six-year rift with a leader of the Christian right.

MCCAIN: United in our great cause and respectful of the goodness in each other. I have not always heeded that injunction myself and I regret it very much.

CROWLEY: Kenyon College is almost smack in the middle of Ohio, the most visited state of the '04 election and the most pivotal. Guess who showed up for graduation?

SEN. JOHN KERRY, (D) MASSACHUSETTS: Even as we flew in over Ohio today, I couldn't help but thinking, Ohio, we came so close. Well, so what. You can't go through life without disappointment.

CROWLEY: Kenyon was the perfect sync of politics in place for Kerry who eyes '08 with '04 in mind.

KERRY: And now we are engaged in a misguided war. Like the war of my generation, it began with an official deception.

CROWLEY: Meanwhile, the '08 candidate seen as most likely to succeed and least likely to talk about it was true to form, giving commencement speeches in the safety of her state of New York. Not one speech . . .

SEN. HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON, (D) NEW YORK: So I do dare you.

CROWLEY: Not two speeches.

CLINTON: I dare you to push yourselves.

CROWLEY: Or three.

CLINTON: I dare you to make some audacious decisions.

CROWLEY: But four commencement speeches, all politics free.

CLINTON: It seems so terrifying at first and then it slowly but surely you take the risk.

CROWLEY: If you're really looking, you can make something of that.

Candy Crowley, CNN, Washington.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

MILES O'BRIEN: A set back now in the weather. Chad Myers at the CNN Center with the.

Hello, Chad.

(WEATHER REPORT)

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: Coming up this morning, we'll bring you the very latest on CBS Reporter Kimberly Dozier's condition. She was critically wounded in Iraq. How tough is it for reporter to get the story out? We'll talk this morning to a "Time" magazine reporter who lost his hand in an attack on his Humvee back in 2003.

MILES O'BRIEN: Also ahead, we'll look at the increased worries over alligator attacks in Florida and why trappers are busier than ever.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: Plus, Andy's "Minding Your Business." If you rent your home, oh, it's going to cost you more. Start digging deeper into that wallet. We'll explain just ahead on AMERICAN MORNING. We're back in a moment.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MILES O'BRIEN: So how do you count alligators? You know, very carefully, right? Well, in Florida, wildlife officials are conducting their annual gator count. It's used to set the number of permits issued to alligator hunters. More hunters are expected this season after three were killed in separate attacks just this past month. CNN's John Zarrella has a report for us. He says the attacks have renewed interest and fear in alligators.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

JOHN ZARRELLA, CNN CORRESPONDENT, (voice over): Not in his 20- plus years of rounding up alligators had Todd Hardwick ever caught one so big, 11.5 feet, more than 600 pounds. The gator trapper called in a tow truck to hoist the writhing beast on to a flatbed.

TODD HARDWICK, ALLIGATOR TRAPPER: He got me good, didn't he?

ZARRELLA: In the wake of three fatal gator attacks on women in Florida, this one killed a jogger west of Ft. Lauderdale, gator trappers have been busier than ever before. Trappers are getting calls nonstop from people spotting gators in backyard lakes and along canals. They're targeting the biggest ones first. The recent attacks have brought on a frenzy of public awareness and degree of alligator anxiety. But experts say they're really isn't anything different between this and past years.

HARDWICK: Everything that we're experiencing right now has happened before, except for three fatalities in less than a week.

ZARRELLA: During Florida's usually dry winters and springs, alligators are on the move looking for water, which usually leads them to urban lakes, closer to humans, and more importantly, this is mating season.

HARDWICK: Because they're breeding and fighting with each other for territory and breeding rights, we literally have these alligators moving down the canal systems into the urban areas.

ZARRELLA: And they don't turn up just in the water. This one crossed without looking both ways. Another took a bite out of a bumper before its capture. Adam Stern is the senior children's zoo keeper at Miami's Metro Zoo. He's holding a four-year-old, 4.5-foot alligator named Kisses.

I'm not sure I want Kisses to be giving me any kisses.

ADAM STERN, MIAMI METRO ZOO: Probably not a good idea.

ZARRELLA: Kisses is motionless in Stern's arms. It looks like a stuffed animal until you see the eyelid roll from front to back. Stern says gators you encounter on land can be just as dangerous as one in the water.

STERN: I know it's kind of like an urban legend that if you try to outrun a gator you do it by zigzagging. But they are so fast, it's not going to happen.

ZARRELLA: By the time you think about making your move to get away, it's probably already to late, right?

STERN: Exactly.

ZARRELLA: Stern says gators don't go out looking for humans to attack. But as Florida's population booms, alligators and people share more of the same land and neither species sees eye to eye.

John Zarrella, CNN, Miami.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: Not seeing eye to eye with one of those guys probably not such a bad thing.

ANDY SERWER, CNN CORRESPONDENT: Stay away. Keep your distance.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: Absolutely.

SERWER: Right.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: Take a bite out of that bumper? Crazy.

SERWER: Yes, and that stick.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: That's crazy stuff.

SERWER: Yes, that's crazy stuff.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: Well, you're not talking about alligators. What have you got coming up?

SERWER: No, I'm not, Soledad.

To own or rent, that is the question for millions of Americans trying to decide whether it makes more sense to buy a home or to rent an apartment or a condo. We'll discuss the pros and cons of that coming up next, Soledad.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: All right, Andy, thanks.

Also ahead this morning, we're going to take you inside the world of competitive eating. There's a new book out, it's called "Horseman of the Esophagus."

SERWER: Wow.

MILES O'BRIEN: Title of the year, I think.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: It really is. The author will join us just ahead on AMERICAN MORNING.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: We say this a lot, but you're going to be paying more if you rent.

SERWER: Yes. That's right.

MILES O'BRIEN: Good time to become a landlord.

SERWER: Yes. That, too.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: I guess.

MILES O'BRIEN: We could turn this around, you know?

SERWER: We're going to talk about rents here. I've got some news coming across the wire here. "The Wall Street Journal" is reporting that President Bush is leaning towards naming Goldman Sachs CEO Hank Paulson as the new treasury secretary to replace John Snow. Of course, John Snow hasn't said he's going anywhere yet. There's been so much speculation over this poor guy. Over the weekend we were talking about Donald Evans.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: And President Bush, the last I heard, he said that Snow hadn't even talk to him.

SERWER: He said he's staying. He's staying. Just want to keep you in the loop out there, OK.

MILES O'BRIEN: You could call it a blizzard of rumors.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: In case he changes his mind.

SERWER: Right. Yes.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: A short list apparently.

SERWER: That's right.

We're going to talk about rents here this morning a little bit. Apartment rents are soaring. The fastest they've grown in six years, up 5.3 percent in 2005. That's more than double last year's increase. Here are some of the numbers.

The biggest jump since 2000, job growth and high home prices causing the increase. The economy's growing 4 million new jobs over the past two years. That will make for more demand.

Home prices, of course, have been soaring. And there's an interesting relationship between the cost of a home and the cost to rent. Had been 12 times as expensive. In other words, owning a home cost 12 times as much as it did to rent. Now it's 21 times. So housing pricing . . .

MILES O'BRIEN: Twelve times to what? Not the monthly? You're talking about . . .

SERWER: The actual cost of a home.

MILES O'BRIEN: Oh, OK.

SERWER: So in other words, a home today is \$223,000, the average home. The average rent is about \$900 a month. That's 20 times. You see what I'm saying?

MILES O'BRIEN: Gotcha.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: Wow.

SERWER: So the gap has widened. So it means really what's going on here is that rents are merely just trying to catch up, if you will, with housing prices. Rents had been a huge bargain.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: But housing prices are out of control.

SERWER: They're out of control and now rents are getting out of control. I think that's -- I mean that's the bottom line

here. But rent's still probably a pretty good deal versus buying a home, particularly in certain sectors.

MILES O'BRIEN: The rise in interest rates probably has something to do with that, right?

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: Right.

SERWER: Yes, that will work in, too.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: All right, Andy, thank you.

SERWER: Thank you.

MILES O'BRIEN: In a moment top stories, including CBS Reporter Kimberly Dozier arriving in Germany for treatment.

Marines involved in that alleged massacre in Haditha, Iraq, may face murder charges.

Afghan troops try to maintain calm on the streets of Kabul.

A House panel holds a hearing today on the raid of Congressman William Jefferson's office.

And we're watching that recovery operation in Indonesia. Quite a task it is. We'll have a live report on some of the big challenges facing the survivors and those rescue workers ahead on AMERICAN MORNING.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MILES O'BRIEN: A CBS journalist arriving in Germany overnight for more critical treatment. She is in intensive care. Two colleagues killed in that attack. We'll have a live update on her condition shortly.

JAMIE MCINTYRE, CNN CORRESPONDENT: I'm Jamie McIntyre at the Pentagon.

How did the alleged massacre at Haditha happen? I'll have a time line coming up.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: An increased military presence in Kabul, but U.S. troops are staying out of sight. Anti-American rioting there is now quieting down, but only after a curfew is imposed.

MILES O'BRIEN: Critical aid finally arriving for those earthquake victims in Indonesia. But there's still so many needs. We'll bring you up-to-date on that.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: And time to pay up. Higher interest rates now hitting homeowners squarely in their checkbooks. Your financial survival guide just head on this AMERICAN MORNING.

Good morning. Welcome back, everybody. I'm Soledad O'Brien.

MILES O'BRIEN: And I'm Miles O'Brien. Thanks for being with us.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: As we've been mentioning all morning, we're expecting an update, really at any moment, on the condition of CBS Reporter Kimberly Dozier. She was flown to the U.S. military hospital in Landstuhl, Germany.

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

[International Edition](#)

[CNN TV](#)

[CNN International](#)

[Headline News](#)

[Transcripts](#)

[Advertise with Us](#)

[About Us](#)

SEARCH

THE WEB


CNN.COM


© 2007 Cable News Network.

A Time Warner Company. All Rights Reserved.

[Terms](#) under which this service is provided to you.

Read our [privacy guidelines](#). [Contact us](#). [Site Map](#).

 External sites open in new window; not endorsed by CNN.com

 [Pay service with live and archived video. Learn more](#)

 [Download audio news](#) |  [Add RSS headlines](#)