



The Washington Post

\$1.50

Weather

Today: Partly sunny.
High 85, Low 66.
Monday: Partly sunny.
High 82, Low 66.
Details C12

132ND YEAR No. 198 A2 MD DC VA Printed using recycled fiber

SUNDAY, JUNE 21, 2009

Wt Mo Tu We Th Fr Sa Su

Reporters Escape Taliban Captors

New York Times, Afghan Journalists Were Held 7 Months

By **KETH B. RICHBURG**
Washington Post Staff Writer

NEW YORK, June 20 — A New York Times reporter kidnapped by the Taliban and held for seven months in the rugged mountainous region along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border escaped Friday, along with a local Afghan reporter, by climbing over a wall and finding a nearby Pakistani army base, according to the newspaper, U.S. officials and the journalists' family.

David Rohde, 41, was taken captive Nov. 10 along with local reporter Tahir Ludin, 35, and their driver while Rohde was researching a book on Afghanistan. News organizations, including The Washington Post, did not report on the abduction at the request of the Times and Rohde's relatives, who feared that publication of the news could endanger the lives of the captives.

Rohde was kidnapped after he, Ludin and their driver, Assadullah Mangal, 24, set out by car for a pre-arranged interview with a local Taliban commander. Rohde, described by friends and colleagues as a brave but cautious reporter who always measured risks before traveling, told colleagues at the Times' Kabul bureau that he expected to be fine. But as a precaution, he left instructions on whom to call if he did not return.

The reporter, a two-time Pulitzer Prize-winner, was beginning work on a book about the history of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan. He had been held captive in 1995 in Bosnian Serb territory while reporting for the Christian Science Monitor on mass killings at the height of the Bosnian war.

Rohde was apparently planning to journey to the eastern province of Logar to meet with a top commander linked to the insurgent network controlled by Jalaluddin Haqqani and his son, Sirajuddin Haqqani.

See **REPORTERS**, Page A12



Media Agreed To Hold Story

In an unusual situation, news organizations stayed silent to protect reporters' safety. **A11**

What Drives a Black Farmer to Work His Fields and the Halls of Congress?



PHOTO BY MELBA MARK — THE WASHINGTON POST

Fourth-generation farmer John Boyd cuts hay near South Hill, Va. In 1999, the government settled the suit brought by black farmers who were denied loans. He received a payment but still toils on behalf of those who did not.

A Quest to Be Heard

By **KRISSAH THOMPSON** | Washington Post Staff Writer

Once again, John Boyd was waiting. He was in the Rayburn building, on the second floor, sitting outside the closed office of an important House Judiciary Committee staffer. It was 15 minutes after the meeting should have started, but the man Boyd had raced over to see was not there.

In a few minutes, Boyd was expected to meet a congressman on the other side of the building.

He sighed. He had driven 3½ hours to get here from his farm near South Hill, Va. The week before, he had made the drive twice. The week before that was also twice, and the week before that, as well.

In fact, he had been making the drive for 8½ years — all to meet more politicians than he can count and to wait for more hours than he cares to remember.

What kind of man does this? Drives and drives? Week after week? Year after year? Making it his life's work?

It is this man, whose cellphone was now ringing. "I'll have to fix it in the morning," he said after listening for a moment. He hung up. His tractor



Rep. John Conyers Jr. (D-Mich.), left, and Boyd, the president of the National Black Farmers Association, talk on the Hill.

had broken down. The hay that needed to be cut wasn't going to get cut. "Lost another day," he said, getting up and moving toward his next appointment.

He walked fast, knowing that time is against him. The old black farmers whose case he comes to Washington to discuss were getting older, dying off, and they still had not been repaid for the years of discrimination to which the government had subjected them. A few weeks before, when President Obama had released his proposed budget, he had included \$1.25 billion for the 70,000 farmers with outstanding claims — an amount that as far as Boyd was concerned was \$1.25 billion short.

He paused at the entrance to the congressman's office, smoothed a wrinkle out of his jacket and cleared his throat.

"John Boyd," he said, walking in. "National Black Farmers Association," he added after a moment.

Eight-and-a-half years, and he was still introducing himself.

See **BOYD**, Page A4

Police Unleash Force On Rally in Tehran

Obama, in Boldest Terms Yet, Presses Iran to Halt Violence Against Own People

By **THOMAS ERDBRINK**
and **WILLIAM BRANTIGEN**
Washington Post Foreign Service

TEHRAN, June 20 — Fiercy chaos broke out in downtown Tehran on Saturday as security forces blocked streets and used tear gas, water cannons and batons to break up a demonstration against the reelection of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Security forces were seen firing warning shots into the air, but there were also unconfirmed reports that several people were hit by gunfire.

President Obama, in his strongest comments to date on a political standoff that has paralyzed Iran for a week, urged the Iranian government "to stop all violent and unjust actions against its own people."

Opposition candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi, who asserts that he was cheated of victory in the June 12 election, said his supporters in the streets were "facing unrighteous liars."

Mousavi, in a statement posted on his campaign Web site, seemed to seek to avoid a direct confrontation with Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, who warned protesters Friday of potential "bloodshed" if they continued mass street demonstrations. Mousavi said the way to restore calm on the streets was for the government to "not only allow for peaceful protests, but to encourage them."

Amid severe restrictions on news media reporting of the protests and conflicting accounts com-



Look to Streets, Not to Tweets

Web tools such as Facebook and Twitter are changing how people face down the government, in Iran and elsewhere. But real revolutions exceed 140 characters. **B1**

Obama Response

The president's three-paragraph statement on Iran echoes earlier, calibrated remarks. **A9**

ing out of Tehran on Saturday, some reports suggested Mousavi was taking a more confrontational stance. The Reuters news agency reported him as saying he was "ready for martyrdom" and vowing to continue his protest movement despite Khamenei's warning. But with foreign journalists prohibited from leaving their offices to wit-

See **IRAN**, Page A10

Nestlé Recall Leaves A Mystery in Its Wake

Officials Probe E. Coli Link to Cookie Dough

By **LYNDESE LAYTON**
and **VALERIE STRAUSS**
Washington Post Staff Writers

Federal microbiologists and food safety investigators have descended on the Danville, Va., plant that makes Nestlé's refrigerated cookie dough, trying to crack a scientific mystery surrounding a national outbreak of illness from *E. coli* O157, a deadly strain of bacteria, which has been linked to the product.

Health officials and food producers puzzled yesterday over how *E. coli* O157, a bacterium that lives in the intestines of cattle, could have ended up in a product that seems so unlikely to contain it. "It's a fascinating outbreak," said Craig Hedberg, an expert on food-borne diseases at the University of Minnesota. "By just looking at package labeling, there is no reason you would expect an event like this to occur."

The outbreak, which has sickened at least 65 people in 29 states, is the latest worry for consumers in the Washington area and across the country unnerved by a wave of food-borne illnesses, including bot-

ulism associated with canned chili and infections from salmonella linked to peanut products. With cookie dough, like peanut butter, being a favorite of children, the latest outbreak is particularly alarming because the young and the elderly are more likely to develop severe complications if infected with *E. coli* O157. More than two-thirds of the 65 victims are younger than 19, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. None has died.

Two of the victims live in Maryland, and two live in Virginia, the CDC reported. Their identities have not been revealed.

In supermarkets yesterday, Nestlé products had been pulled from the refrigerated section, and consumers were left to ponder the safety of the U.S. food system.

"When I heard about the recall, I thought, 'Is nothing safe anymore?'" said Carole Feld, a D.C. resident who has a 13-year-old child, pushing a shopping cart through a Glover Park Whole

See **COOKIES**, Page A5

Obama's Travel Mixes Policy, Politics

States With Close Electoral Results Getting Most of His Visits

By **SCOTT WILSON**

places, his margin of victory or decisively in his domestic travel itiner-

NATION

Struggling Landing for Oswego, N.Y.

The demise of a presidential

INSIDE

METRO

Eastern Market Prepares To Reopen Friday

More than two years after a



Still Fighting for Black Farmers

Boyd Got His Payment and Now Toils for Those Who Did Not

BOYD. From Page A1

Earlier that day, Boyd had been just another farmer trying to get soybean seed in the ground during the short window that is planting season. He picked up his cousin and a hired hand just after daybreak to begin working on a 116-acre tract of land, hustled back to his house to change into a pin-striped suit and black cowboy boots, and grabbed a cup of coffee and a copy of the congressional directory.

Through his windshield of his old Mercedes, he took a last look at his farmhouse and the small room in front that houses the National Black Farmers Association.

For several miles, he drove past neat rows of freshly planted tobacco and tiny sprouts of soybeans on Virginia Route 47, and imagined the owners of those fields: white men with shiny, green John Deere tractors who never had to drive the government for a farm loan. He drove past the feed store and described the sales clerks inside: all white, and all greeting him tersely because he has "refused to quit pushing for justice for the black farmer." He drove past the barber-shop he goes to, where the old black farmers say things to him such as, "When I look around in the country, I can't tell if my president is black or not."

Boyd doesn't disagree with them. "There's still inequality in jobs, in ownership. We are the first fired," he said, past South Hill now and nearing the interstate. "They don't want me to have my farm. Look like to me they don't want black people to have anything of substance."

His voice carried traces of bitterness, the product of years of heartache that he said began in 1994, when he was 28 and his farm was nearing foreclosure. Year after year, he had been applying to the U.S. Department of Agriculture for operating loans. Year after year, the applications were denied or delayed. Now a white farm service loan officer was tearing up Boyd's application in his face and cursing at him, and Boyd was cursing back.

"What is it about me that doesn't qualify?" he demanded, and then he went home to tell his

wife that again there would be no loan to plant crops. They argued about the farm and their debts. Boyd told her he refused to let the farm go. The small towns around South Hill are as far back as Boyd can trace his family line. His father was raised on a farm with 12 brothers and sisters. His grandfather Thomas was a farmer. His great-grandfather was born a slave on the Boyd plantation, just outside of South Hill.

Soon after the argument, Boyd's marriage fell apart, his ex-wife moved his only son off the farm to Richmond, and the government began the process of seizing Boyd's land. A USDA employee drove a "For Sale" sign in his yard. Boyd took his chain saw and sliced the sign in half, but his anger didn't make the foreclosure any less threatening.

"That was the first time in my life that I actually felt helpless," Boyd said. "It's really worse than a fistfight, because in a fistfight I can get a few licks in."

Then Boyd heard about a way to throw a punch without going to jail. He joined a lawsuit. Black farmers were suing the government, saying they should be compensated for all the loans they didn't receive because of discriminatory lending practices. In 1999, the government settled the case for \$1 billion. Sixteen thousand farmers received at least \$50,000 apiece and debt forgiveness, and Boyd was one of them.

He bought a new tractor. He paid off his chicken coop, leased farmland in neighboring counties and bought beef cattle.

He had become a successful farmer, but the settlement did not bring his family back together. Boyd could not find peace with the money. Bitterness took root.

"Discrimination ruins lives" is how he put it as he drove. "It brought out the burn in me."

In others, too: After the settlement, 70,000 additional farmers said they hadn't known of the lawsuit. They wanted the case reopened. Boyd decided he could help—not as a claimant this time, but as an advocate.

One day in 2000, he drove to Washington to press the case with whomever would meet with him. A



After a conference call in his home office that is the National Black Farmers Association, Boyd will return to his fields this day and work into the night. And, once or twice this week and the next and the next, he will drive to Washington.



Boyd waits on Capitol Hill before hoping to tell another lawmaker that \$1.25 billion is not enough to pay the outstanding claims of black farmers.

week later, he went again. And the week after that.

And now it was 8½ years later, the familiar miles were passing by, he was lost in thought, and before too long he had arrived.

He parked in the lot he always parks in and greeted the Ethiopian parking attendant as he does every time, by handing \$10 cash out the

window and saying "Teansstellen" —hello in Amharic.

Walking into the massive congressional complex, he passed 11 people dressed in red "Reform Immigration for America" T-shirts and matching stickers, and then started assembling his own entourage.

"Chris Ray," he said to a man with a camera around his neck. The man knows little about Con-

MORE PHOTOS

To see a photo gallery and listen to audio, go to www.washingtonpost.com/nation.

gress or farming but likes to follow along with his friend Boyd, snap pictures and introduce himself as "staff of the National Black Farmers Association."

"Dr. John Boyd," Chris Ray replied to Boyd, who didn't attend college but has received two honorary degrees for his work on behalf of black farmers.

"Luke," Boyd said now to Lawrence Lucas, a retired government worker who has helped USDA employees file discrimination claims against the department and advised Boyd in his settlement.

"How you doin', my man?" said Lucas, who remembers Boyd's early days doing this, when Boyd would do anything to try to get people's attention, including riding a mule for 17 days in 2003 to Washington from South Hill.

Older now, mellower now, the

men embraced.

"What's up for the day?" Lucas asked, and the answer was the same as it had been the previous week and the weeks before: go around, meet whomever they could, and take it from there.

It's an approach that sometimes works better than others. The week before, for example, Boyd had been inside the White House's Office of Public Engagement, otherwise known as presidential senior adviser Valerie Jarrett's office, to suggest that the \$1.25 billion Obama was budgeting was nowhere near enough money for 70,000 farmers who didn't receive payments. Boyd isn't the only one making the case for more money, but he was the one shaking hands with Jarrett that day, perhaps because he worked on behalf of Obama during last year's election and promised farmer after farmer that Obama would come through for them.

"He'll get us the black farmer money before planting season" was how Boyd would put it, full of belief, but now planting season was here and he was saying to Lucas as they walked down a hallway: "The president is black. The attorney general is black. We have Democrats in control of Congress. Why can't we get it done?"

Ray, meanwhile, was a few steps behind, grabbing a free cherry strudel from a tray in the hallway. Before he caught up, he said, "John is all the black farmers have, and he knows he is all they have."

They walked along until they arrived at the first office where Boyd had an appointment. Fifteen minutes of waiting later, he sighed, received the phone call that his once-new tractor had broken down, and moved onto the next appointment.

"John Boyd," he said, "National Black Farmers Association."

He was in the office of Rep. Ed Towns (D-N.Y.), whose deputy chief of staff, Roberta Hopkins, came out of her office to greet him.

"Hey, Roberta?"

"How are you doing, John?" she asked, returning the bearhug Boyd offered.

Boyd and Lucas sat down at a small conference table. Hopkins pulled up an extra chair to make room for Ray and asked, "What's going on, John?" Then, she scribbled notes onto a legal pad as Boyd spoke.

"Right."

After 15 minutes, she brought the meeting to a polite end and told Boyd what his next step should be with her boss. "Write a letter, and I'll see that he gets it," she said.

Outside the office, Boyd said excitedly, "Luke, we opened the door."

Onto the next meeting, this one with Elizabeth Burks, chief of staff to Sen. Blanche Lincoln (D-Ark.). Boyd sat stiffly on a small sofa in Burks's office. This was his first time meeting her. He introduced himself and began speaking in a low, unsure voice. He has learned over the years to mask his occasional nervousness with the lingo of Capitol Hill, but sometimes it doesn't quite work and results in a stutter or misspoken word.

"The problem is, even having a line item in the 2010 budget puts us a year-and-a-half, maybe two years out. If there is any kind of way we can expedite — expedite, excuse me — the payments to the farmers," he said. He continued as Burks took notes and then fell silent as Lucas began to talk.

"There are very few people who know about the problem and how to solve the problem better than John Boyd," Lucas said. "We have been working on the issue since '94, and both John and I have testified on the Hill. We want to be a part of the solution."

"We have waited eight years to see this kind of change," Boyd said.

"This civil rights struggle has been a long one, and I think if we miss this opportunity, we might lose it forever," Lucas said.

"I do, too," Boyd said.

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