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## AROUND THE WORLD

### — Journal Wire Reports

#### **Rice Touts U.S.-Iraq Accord**

BAGHDAD — Iraq and the U.S. have reached preliminary agreement to withdraw American forces from Iraqi cities by next June, six years into the war, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari said Thursday after meeting with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

The negotiations over a withdrawal timetable follow long insistence by President Bush that setting any schedule for U.S. troops to leave would be dangerous. The draft agreement with Iraq would link troop reductions to achievement of certain security milestones, although the details have not been made public.

Rice and Zebari, appearing together at a news conference, asserted that the proposed deal reflects growing confidence in the ability of Iraqi forces to secure the country. A final agreement would require endorsement of the proposed deal by top Iraqi leaders and the Iraqi parliament.

#### **Officials To Euthanize Whale**

SYDNEY, Australia — Wildlife officials moved ahead today with plans to euthanize an injured and abandoned baby humpback whale that has been trying to suckle boats in the waters off Sydney.

The decision was made Thursday after veterinarians and marine researchers examined the whale, determining that its condition had deteriorated to the point that euthanizing it was the most humane thing to do.

But officials later were unable to find the whale in the dark waters of Pittwater Inlet. Early today, the whale was located, and officials moved ahead with plans to sedate it before administering a fatal dose of drugs later in the day.

#### **Airstrike Kills 30 Insurgents**

KABUL, Afghanistan — The U.S.-led coalition said Thursday that it had killed more than 30 insurgents in a battle in eastern Afghanistan, fighters an Afghan governor said were responsible for an attack that killed 10 French troops this week. Officials announced the deaths of six NATO soldiers in two attacks.

Lutfullah Mashal, the governor of Laghman province, said coalition bombs targeted fighters on the border of Laghman and Kabul provinces. He said the insurgents were fleeing the valley where Monday's attack on the French took place.

Mashal said Wednesday night's airstrike was not directly in retaliation for the French ambush because the targeted militants also had been involved in "repeated attacks" in the area.