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FINAL

Sonora area turns danger zone

Residents, services flee once-quiet border valley amid surge in violence

By Elliott Spagat
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
ALTAR, Sonora — Few residents here dare to drive on one of the roads out of

this watering hole for migrants, fearing they will be stopped at gunpoint. They worry they will be told to turn around after their gas tanks are drained or, worse, be kidnapped or killed.
A shootout that left 21 people dead and six wounded on the road last week is the most gruesome sign that a relatively tranquil pocket of northern Mexico is quickly turning into a hotbed of drug-fueled violence on Arizona's

doorstep.
The violence in recent months is grist for supporters of the state's tough
See VIOLENCE, A4
Vote shows Mexicans divided on leadership / A13
On StarNet: Read more about border- and immigration-related issues in Brady McCombs' blog, Border Boletín, at go.azstarnet.com/borderboletin

WEDDING GOWN A WEB SENSATION



DAVID SANDERS / ARIZONA DAILY STAR
You've heard of glad rags? Well, these are sad rags — the remnants of the wedding dress that belonged to Tucsonan Kevin Cotter's ex-wife. Here, he's using the garment as a tarp to collect plant trimmings. Fans of his website welcome back Cotter each time he returns to post another use for the dress.

Duds were a dud, until now

By Phil Villarreal
ARIZONA DAILY STAR
Local blogger Kevin Cotter has turned a heartbreaking divorce into a new side career and flight to fame.
The ticket to that flight? His ex-wife's wedding dress.
A year ago, when she left him after 12 years of marriage and two kids, all that remained was the gown.

Cotter stared at the white, frilly remnant and wondered what to do with the symbol of a failed marriage to his high school sweetheart.
Now he gets up to 5,000 online visitors a day offering suggestions.
Cotter has become an Internet sensation by doing silly, morbid things with the dress, and then posting pictures and writing on the darkly humorous website

Myexwifesweddingdress.com, which he started with help from his brother, Colin, in May.
One shot has Cotter bundled up on his bed, using the dress as a blanket. Another has him using the dress as a banner that says "GO CATS." Cotter also has used the dress athletically, as a
See WEDDING GOWN, A4

Pima has new legal-aid office for kids

Officials project big savings handling abuse, neglect cases

By Kim Smith
ARIZONA DAILY STAR
Pima County officials have created an Office of Children's Counsel to handle abuse and neglect cases, hoping to save hundreds of thousands of dollars by not hiring outside attorneys.
The office will be composed of county-paid attorneys and staff members who will handle cases in which authorities have questions about whether parents are able to take proper care of their children.
So far, one attorney has been hired to head up the office, but additional lawyers will be hired at intervals once it's determined what an appropriate caseload is, said Assistant County Administrator Lindy Funkhouser.
Instead of paying a contract attorney \$60 to \$65 an hour, the county will pay the attorneys an annual salary based on their years of experience, Funkhouser said.
Edith Croxen, who is heading up the office, was hired at an annual salary of \$105,000.
"We think the low end of the savings for the first year could be about \$350,000," Funkhouser said.
The office officially opened Thursday.
It is also possible the office will one day begin to represent the parents in such cases, again alleviating the need to hire contract attorneys, Funkhouser said.
Up until now, the county has paid contract attorneys about \$4.5 million annually to represent children and adults in dependency cases, Funkhouser said.
Jan Kearney, presiding Pima County Superior Court judge, said she is pleased with the move.
"I do think at the outset that it's important with our financial situation the way it is, to make the most efficient use of our resources that we can," Kearney said.
Kearney said she expects the quality of the representation each child receives to continue to be of the highest caliber.
People who choose to practice in this field are highly dedicated, specially trained attorneys who routinely "go above and beyond," Kearney said.
"We're lucky to have the expertise we have in Pima County," Kearney said.

Contact reporter Kim Smith at 573-4241 or kimsmith@azstarnet.com
On StarNet: Follow the news and events at Pima County's courthouses in Kim Smith's blog. At the Courthouse, at go.azstarnet.com/courthouse

NEWS ANALYSIS

Al-Qaida-aligned forces fuel 'synergy' of threats to US

By Kimberly Dozier
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON — U.S. officials boast that al-Qaida has never been weaker, its upper ranks decimated because of the stepped-up drone attacks in Pakistan and special-

operations raids in Afghanistan.
At the same time, they warn, in seeming contradiction: An even greater number of well-trained terrorists are setting their sights on the United States.
Across the remote tribal lands

between Afghanistan and Pakistan where terror groups hide, U.S. officials say they've seen a fusion of al-Qaida and others targeted by U.S. forces, including the Haqqani group and the Pakistani Taliban, who formerly focused only on

their local areas.
Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the groups have become a "synergy of terrorist groups" with "an expanding desire to kill Americans." He spoke last week at the Aspen
Institute security forum in Aspen, Colo.
At the same forum, National Counterterrorism Center Director Michael Leiter warned that the
See THREATS, A4

COMING WEDNESDAY BBQ delight

Fire up the grill with tips on preparing and grilling baby-back ribs.



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INSIDE TODAY'S DAILY STAR	Man killed at convenience store	Mortgage-loan officers now need licenses	TODAY'S WEATHER
Business A8	Two sought in incident described as botched robbery. Page A2	State working through backlog of applications from loan originators. Page A8	High: 100 / Low: 72
Editorial A9			No rain just yet

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