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Army names sergeant major

27-year veteran served with 1st Armored Division

By **CHUCK VINCH**
Washington bureau

WASHINGTON — The Army has selected a 27-year veteran with extensive overseas experience to replace Sergeant Major of the Army Gene McKinney, the service's top uniformed official announced Monday.

Sgt. Maj. Robert Hall, the top enlisted soldier for the U.S. Central Command, has been named to assume McKinney's place as the 11th sergeant major of the Army, Chief of Staff Gen. Dennis J. Reimer said.

Hall, a married father of three, has spent three years with Central Command, the unified command responsible for U.S. forces in the

Middle East and Africa. He saw combat in the Persian Gulf War as the command sergeant major for the 24th Infantry Division's artillery forces.

He has also served tours with the 1st Armored Division in Germany and the 2nd Infantry Division in South Korea. He has held every enlisted leadership position, including

squad leader, platoon sergeant, battalion operations sergeant and first sergeant.

He also has experience as a drill sergeant at Fort Bliss, Texas, and as an instructor at the Sergeants Major Academy there.

McKinney, 46, remains embroiled in a sex scandal that has crept

See **ARMY** on Page 2



Hall

Denver dies in air crash

Folk singer gained fans worldwide

By **DAVID KLIGMAN**
The Associated Press

PACIFIC GROVE, Calif. — John Denver, whose '70s hits such as *Rocky Mountain High* and *Take Me Home, Country Roads* gained him millions of fans worldwide, was killed when his experimental plane crashed into Monterey Bay. He was 53.

The identity of the body pulled from the waters after Sunday's crash was confirmed from fingerprints sent from Colorado, Monterey County Sheriff Norman Hicks said Monday. An autopsy was planned.

"He loved flying," said Teri Martell, whose sister Annie was Denver's first wife. "He died doing something he loved."

As the sun rose over the crash site Monday, a Coast Guard helicopter circled overhead, appearing to look for more debris from the crash, and a Coast Guard ship floated over the site about 100 yards from shore.

The plane, which he owned,
See **DENVER** on Page 2



AP file photo



John Denver (above) sings "Sunshine On My Shoulders" in Pebble Beach, Calif., in January 1996. The 53-year-old singer was killed while flying an experimental plane Sunday night near Pacific Grove, Calif. Denver and late actor George Burns (left) laugh over their lines as they rehearse a scene for the movie "Oh, God!" in Los Angeles in 1976.

Iraq calling presence of Nimitz propaganda

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) — Iraq on Monday dismissed the arrival of the aircraft carrier Nimitz in the Persian Gulf as nothing more than "noisy American propaganda."

The Nimitz, which carries 75 warplanes and is accompanied by six warships, arrived in the gulf Sunday.

The Nimitz "tours the world searching for an opportunity to attack or to threaten in a way that proves ... that America is still strong and can hurt," al-Thawra, the ruling Baath Party's official newspaper said in an editorial.

"Why this noisy American propaganda?" it asked.

"It looks like the arrogance of a monster who has no brains, thinking that if he screams and shows his muscles, he would be showing the others that he is powerful," the newspaper said.

The United States ordered the battle group to the area two weeks ahead of schedule after Iranian warplanes bombed two Iranian insurgent bases in southern Iraq on Sept. 29. The raids violated the Western allies' "no-fly" zone.

Washington warned Iran and Iraq, which sent up two fighters after the Iranian raid, against further violations of the zone.

The paper defended Iraq's violation of the "no-fly zone," saying it had the legal right "to defend itself against aggression inside its national borders."

The Nimitz's arrival came a day after Iran launched major naval maneuvers in the strategic

See **IRAQ** on Page 2

La Salle makes 'historic' port call

KIEV, Ukraine (AP) — The flagship of the U.S. Navy fleet in the Mediterranean sailed into the Crimean port of Yalta on Monday.

The La Salle is on a three-day visit, the latest marker of tightening military ties with Ukraine.

The La Salle's port call was the first by the command ship of the U.S. 6th Fleet to Crimea since the Soviet collapse left the mostly ethnic Russian peninsula in Ukrainian hands, a Ukrainian navy spokesman said.

"This visit is of historic importance for the American Navy and marks one more

step toward cooperation between the two fleets," the spokesman quoted the 6th Fleet commander, Vice Adm. Charles S. Abbot, as saying.

His comments came in a meeting with Ukrainian navy chief Mykhaylo Yezhel in Sevastopol, the Crimean base shared uncomfortably by Ukraine's fledgling naval force and the Russian Black Sea Fleet.

During the Cold War, the 6th Fleet was the American counterbalance of the Soviet Black Sea Fleet, which is being split between Russia and Ukraine.

The Kremlin and many ethnic Russians

on Crimea bristled at Ukrainian-hosted military exercises that brought U.S. warships to the Crimean coast in August.

La Salle crew members were slated to give humanitarian aid to a hospital, perform in concerts and paint the roof of a church in Yalta during the visit.

Ships from the 6th Fleet periodically make port calls in the Mediterranean region to boost ties with countries friendly to the United States.

The 6th Fleet has headquarters at the port of Gaeta, Italy.



AP/S&S