

The Grand Rapids Press

60 PAGES

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WEDNESDAY



Rare moment: Mariel Zagunis celebrates after taking the gold medal in the Women's Individual Sabre competition on Tuesday. It was the first U.S. gold medal in fencing since 1904.

OLYMPICS UPDATE

NOTEWORTHY MOMENT: The 13-hundredths of a second by which U.S. swimmer Klete Keller edged Ian Thorpe in the men's 800-meter freestyle relay, taking back the Olympic title from the Australians and giving Michael Phelps his third gold medal — enough to tie Thorpe in the individual count.

TODAY: The ancient Olympics went 1,193 years without the shot put, but that is the featured event when the Games return to their birthplace — Olympia — for the first time since the year 393. Also, the surprising Iraqi men's soccer team puts its 2-0 record up against Morocco (live at 1:30 p.m. on MSNBC).

MEDAL LEADERS

	Gold	S	B	Tot.
United States	6	7	6	19
China	10	6	2	18
Australia	6	3	5	14
Russia	2	5	5	12
Japan	6	2	1	9
France	2	2	4	8

TUNING IN: Track and field joins the mix, while women's beach volleyball gets a live spot. Male gymnasts and more swimmers also show on NBC. Times are 12:30 to 4 p.m., 8 p.m. to midnight and 12:35 to 2 a.m.

DETAILS IN SPORTS, D1

NATION/WORLD

No compromise
Militant cleric Muqtada al-Sadr snubs an Iraqi delegation as the U.S. military tightens the noose in Najaf. **A3**

BUSINESS

Take a seat
Steelcase steps into the medical-office market. **E1**

THE REGION

Lakefront battle
A homeowner is convicted of violating state law for building a seawall on his property on Bostwick Lake. **B1**

Middle of the pack
Michigan's high school students tie for 25th in ACT scores. **B3**

FLAIR



Summer's golden treasure: Fresh sweet corn, on the cob or off, as in this corn loaf and the roasted corn and black bean salad, is one of the season's greatest tastes. **Flair, C1**

SPORTS

One step closer
The local Big League softball team thumps Canada to remain undefeated in World Series play. **D1**

Smashing a slump
Bobby Higginson hits a pair of home runs in Detroit's 11-8 win over the White Sox. **D5**

State shows plans for interstates

► MDOT will hold an open house to air its ideas for improving the Int. 196/Int. 96 corridor east of downtown.

By Cami Reister
The Grand Rapids Press

Gas. Brake.
Gas. Brake.
Gas. Brake.
Anyone traveling Int. 196 downtown during rush hour knows the rhythm. "It turns to stop-and-go," said Kevin Richards, the voice of Grand Rapids Sky-

view Traffic, which provides traffic reports to local broadcasters.

"It was designed back in the '50s and '60s for travel in the '60s and '70s, and now it's past the '90s and it's way out of date," he said.

And then there is the harrowing experience of driving east on Int. 96 with the hope of getting off at East Beltline Avenue NE, but only after crossing two lanes of traffic from Int. 196.

"Very scary," said Linda Missad, who lives on the Northwest Side of Grand Rapids. "Hold your breath, plan ahead and hope you can merge. There are times I've gone on to the next exit."

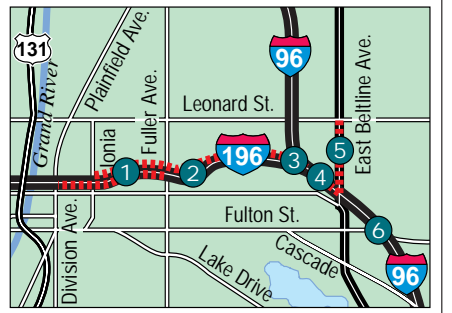
Attention, drivers: MDOT is listening.

see ROADS, A4

Construction ahead

Proposals for the Int. 196/96 corridor to be discussed at MDOT's open house:

1. Additional lane between Fuller and Division avenues.
2. Additional travel lane on Int. 196 between Ionia Avenue and the Int. 96 junction.
3. Added connections to create a complete interchange between Int. 96 and Int. 196.
4. Redesigning Int. 96/Int. 196 merge at the East Beltline to ease lane changes.
5. Improvements on East Beltline from Int. 96 to Leonard Street to enhance Int. 96 access.

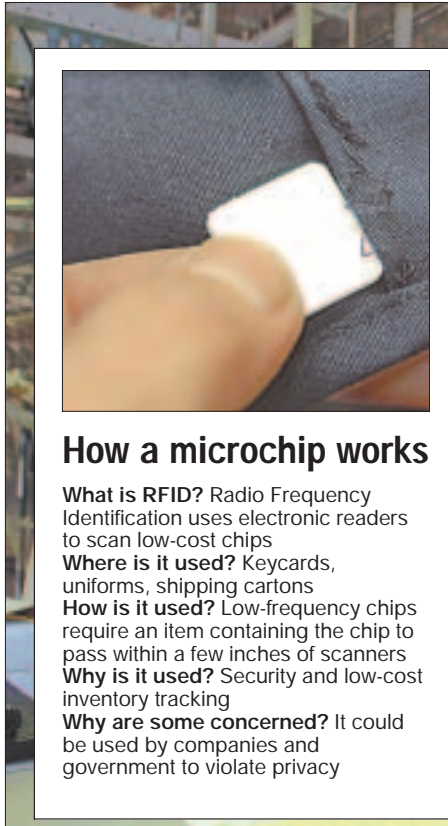


6. Additional ramps at Int. 96/M-21 interchange.

PRESS GRAPHIC/NANCY JONESFRANCIS

Is Big Brother washing you?

Company says microchip in uniform aids laundry, not snooping



How a microchip works

What is RFID? Radio Frequency Identification uses electronic readers to scan low-cost chips
Where is it used? Keycards, uniforms, shipping cartons
How is it used? Low-frequency chips require an item containing the chip to pass within a few inches of scanners
Why is it used? Security and low-cost inventory tracking
Why are some concerned? It could be used by companies and government to violate privacy



PRESS PHOTOS/ANNA MOORE BUTZNER

Gordon Reynolds, vice president at Grantex Inc., checks the flow of uniforms at the computer control station, which he calls the "brains" of the Radio Frequency Identification computer tracking system.

Uniform supplier uses technology to boost efficiency

By Chris Knape
The Grand Rapids Press

There's a microchip in your pants.
At least if your work uniform comes from Grantex Inc., a supplier to Steelcase Inc., General Motors Corp. and other companies.

Wyoming-based Grantex has become a pioneer in the controversial field of Radio Frequency Identification, known as RFID, by sewing tiny microchips into every garment it handles.

Don't worry: Grantex isn't watching what's in its trousers or where shirts go once they leave the company's plant in Wyoming.

The "smart tags" used by Grantex are low-frequency chips that require each garment to pass within a few inches of the company's scanners to register.

About the size of a quarter, the tags are sewn into low-wear areas of garments where they are unlikely to bother the wearer.

Privacy advocates have assailed the technology as Big Brother-like.

They fear the tags could be used by

companies to track customer movements and buying habits or by law enforcement agencies to track citizens.

The 2002 Steven Spielberg/Tom Cruise movie "Minority Report" has scenes some say show the extreme possibilities of RFID.

In the film, electronic billboards adjust themselves based on the person who is moving past, and surveillance systems track someone's every move. At Grantex, there are no sinister motives, President Douglas Singer said.

The company makes no secret about its use of RFID. It even developed a cartoon mascot named Chip to market the advantages of its "smart garments."

Grantex uses the chips to automat-

see MICROCHIP, A4

Soldier sues for right to quit

► He challenges the "stop-loss" policy that could keep up to 20,000 Army people beyond their enlistment commitment.

By David Kravets
The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — A California Army National Guard soldier sued the military in federal court Tuesday over a program that could keep up to 20,000 Army personnel beyond their time of service.

It was the first lawsuit challenging extended military service following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. The program, known as "stop-loss," also was enacted during the buildup to the 1991 Gulf War.

The soldier's complaint comes as the Army struggles to find fresh units to serve in Iraq. Almost every combat unit has faced or will face duty there or in Afghanistan, and increased violence has forced the deployment of an additional 20,000 troops to the Iraq region.

The Army says its stop-loss program is necessary for a cohesive military with seasoned personnel, although it has been criticized as contrary to the concept of an all-volunteer military force.

The soldier's attorneys did not release his name, age or hometown to protect his family's privacy.

"It's not that John Doe is a coward by any means," said the sergeant's San Francisco attorney, Michael Sorgen. He said his client, who was also ordered to stay in Iraq last year beyond his enlisted commitment, suffers from post traumatic stress disorder, and his deployment has been put on hold.

According to the lawsuit, the soldier has more than a decade of service with the Marines, including combat in Iraq and Somalia. Last year, after returning from Iraq, he agreed to resign with a one-year commitment to the National Guard.

But he recently was notified that his service had been extended by as much as

see SOLDIER, A4

Golfer gets his 'Big Break,' but the outcome is a secret

IONIA

By Greg Johnson
The Grand Rapids Press

Ionia's Bart "Hollywood" Lower, golf range builder and owner, school supplies salesman and professional golfer, can't tell you if he won or not.

It's in his contract. He can't even tell his bride of two months.

"I don't know," he has been told to answer.

Lower, 27, and builder/owner of Bart's Golf Center on Kelsey Highway in Ionia, is one of the 10 golfers who will star in The Golf Channel's "The Big Break II" that starts an 11-week run Sept. 28 at 9 p.m. on the cable channel.

Filming ended in June, after auditions and selections from more than 5,000 applicant golfers. Until recently, he couldn't

tell people he was going to be on the show.

"They keep reminding us of the contract," he said.

"The Big Break" of last year was filmed at Treetops Resort in Gaylord, and starred Treetops owner and Phil Mickelson's teacher, Rick Smith, as a co-host. Matthew Friedman, public relations spokesman for The Golf Channel, said the popularity of the show prompted a sequel.

"It was a hit," he said. "We set out to make it bigger and better."

The 10 golfers compete in various skills challenges each week and have their individual stories told on the show. One golfer is eliminated each week until one remains. Last year, that golfer received his "Big Break" in an

exemption to play on the Canadian Tour.

This year, the popularity of the show has kicked the rewards up a notch, and taping was at various golf venues in Las Vegas. The winner will receive an exemption to the Nationwide Tour, which is the PGA Tour's official feeder. In addition, Nationwide will give the winner a \$10,000 check, and Ford Motor Co. will award a luxury sedan.

Lower called it an awesome experience.

"They treated us like rock stars," he said. "We stayed at the Treasure Island (casino), and the best way to describe it is that they customized the penthouse for golfers. We were also at some great, just great golf courses."

It is big news in Ionia, where Lower married Niki Swainston in July, four days after returning from taping the show. His in-laws own a pub called Talespin-



COURTESY PHOTO/THE GOLF CHANNEL

Bart Lower, of Ionia, putts as a crew from The Golf Channel films.

ners, which plans to host "Barty Parties" on the Tuesday nights the show runs this fall. Another local establishment, Gregory's Tavern, also is planning parties around the show.

"It's really been an incredible experience so far, and everybody has to tune in to see how it ends," Lower said. "I just can't tell anybody how it turns out. You know, I don't know."



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U.S. troop plans in Uzbekistan questioned

► Analysts say increasing U.S. military presence there could spark radical Islamic violence.

The Associated Press

ALMATY, Kazakhstan — Washington's plans to beef up its military base in Uzbekistan as part of a troop realignment abroad could whip up tensions between the impoverished ex-Soviet republic's secular government and radical Islamic groups, analysts and opposition politicians say.

Top Pentagon officials said Monday the United States would make greater use of training and logistics bases on the soil of new allies such as Uzbekistan, Poland and Romania, while closing some U.S. installations in Europe to consolidate forces at larger bases there.

U.S. troops arrived at the Karshi-Khanabad air base in southern Uzbekistan, 90 miles from the Afghan border, in 2001 after the Sept. 11 attacks in their first deployment in a former Soviet country.

The base, which hosts about 1,000 U.S. troops, served as a main hub for U.S. special operations in Afghanistan, with the number of troops there at times reaching several thousand. The Americans always stressed that they intended the base to be temporary.

Foreign Minister Sadyk Safoyev had said earlier that Tashkent would consider a permanent U.S. base if Washington wanted one. However, the Uzbek government has always been tightlipped on the extent of the base and insisted it's used only for humanitarian operations, a line considered vital to head off public discontent.

Uzbek officials and the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent declined comment on the Pentagon's latest statement.

Atonazar Arifov, leader of the outlawed Erk party, said a more permanent U.S. military presence could strengthen anti-American feeling among Uzbeks because they have allegedly seen only "a reverse effect" on democratic development from Tashkent's increased ties with Washington.

"I welcome American democracy, but I cannot respect the use of force," he said.

President Islam Karimov's government has long struggled with radical Islamic groups, which easily find followers among Uzbeks frustrated by the lack of economic and democratic reforms.

In March and April, the capital Tashkent and the central Bukhara



A U.S. presence: 1st Sgt. John Steed, 36, of Richmond, Va., right, leads military chants for troops from the Charlie 725 Main Support Battalion of the 25th Infantry Division as they arrive at Karshi-Khanabad air base, Uzbekistan, in April. Washington's plans to beef up its military base in Uzbekistan could whip up tensions between the country's government and radical Islamic groups, analysts say.

region were shaken by a string of explosions and assaults against police that killed 47 people. Last month, suicide bombers attacked the U.S. and Israeli embassies and the chief prosecutor's office in Tashkent, killing seven and injuring another seven.

Authorities said both waves of attacks were the work of al-Qaida-linked groups based outside the country.

However, critics said the violence may have been triggered by Islamic fundamentalists' anger over Karimov's persecution of dissident Muslims. Thousands of devout Muslims have been imprisoned.

Kamal Burkhanov, director of the Kazakhstan-based Institute of Russia and China, said Washington's plans to consolidate its military position in Central Asia could provoke further attacks by Islamic radicals.

"Nothing can strengthen Karimov's position now," he said. "One or two more American bases will hardly improve the situation there, which is very explosive."

Arkady Dubnov, Central Asia expert for Russia's Vremya Novostei newspaper, warned of a "fierce" reaction from Islamic radicals to the possible arrival of more U.S. troops in Uzbekistan.

"They are going to take it as justification of their recent attacks against the U.S. and Israeli embassies," he said.

SOLDIER

Army says 'stop-loss' necessary

CONTINUED FROM A1

two years, and that he could soon be heading to Iraq for another combat tour, according to court documents.

Sorgen said the soldier could be involuntarily retained in the military during a time of war or national emergency, but "Congress has not declared war or a national emergency."

The lawsuit notes the Sept. 11 commission's report said there was no "collaborative operational relationship" between terrorists

and Iraq plotting attacks against the United States.

Lt. Pamela Hart, an Army spokeswoman, said stop-loss is vital for a strong military.

She said the Army empathizes with enlistees like Doe.

"It's disheartening for the soldiers and their families when they find that their loved one has been extended," said Hart, who added that she, also, has been subjected to a stop-loss extension.

"But we all have to sacrifice. ... We're at war."

No court date has been set.

ROADS

Proposals can be viewed Thursday

CONTINUED FROM A1

State transportation workers have developed six proposals aimed at improving traffic on both interstates east of downtown.

The public can weigh in at an open house Thursday at Grand Rapids Township Hall.

"We have all of our determinations based on the engineering standpoint," said Stephanie Litaaker, Michigan Department of Transportation spokeswoman. "This is a chance for people to come out and give us the human standpoint, too."

The open house is a required step on the path to construction. The state must analyze the social, economic and environmental impacts of the project.

The study area covers Int. 196, between U.S. 131 and the Int. 96 junction, Int. 96 between Leonard and Fulton streets, and the East Beltline between Knapp and Fulton.

Chris Dingman, senior transportation planner at the Grand Valley Metro Council, said traffic is growing in that area, pushing the need for improvements.

Statistics show:

- Between 60,200 and 85,500 vehicles travel Int. 196 between U.S. 131 and Int. 96 every day.
- 41,300 vehicles travel Int. 96 just north of the Int. 196 junction daily.
- 103,000 vehicles travel the section of highway where the two

IF YOU GO

WHAT: Open house to learn about possible improvements to the Int. 196/Int. 96 corridor and surrounding area.

WHERE: Grand Rapids Township Hall, 1836 East Beltline NE

WHEN: Thursday, Aug. 19 3:30 to 7:30 p.m.

WHO: Hosted by the Michigan Department of Transportation.

interstates merge.

- 81,000 vehicles travel Int. 96 between the East Beltline and Fulton.

"It's a place where a lot of people want to go in a short time," Dingman said.

Ed Swanson, transportation forum chairman for the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, said improvements are needed, especially at the merge of Int. 96 and Int. 196.

There is a "lot of confusion that can be corrected," he said.

While the decisions on what to do won't be made for months, Litaaker said some bridge widening could begin by spring 2006.

"For the rest of it, it will be programmed as we get the money," she said. "I don't see this as being a budget threat."



Police officers check a car in the Uzbek capital Tashkent on July 31 after suicide bombers hit the U.S. and the Israeli embassies.

MICROCHIP Employers should be honest about RFID, group says

CONTINUED FROM A1

ically track and sort clothing it rents to companies.

It is considered a more efficient version of the bar-code system.

After being programmed, a computer can keep track of how many times a garment has been laundered, whether a garment is missing, or if it needs to be repaired or undergo special cleaning.

Away from the Grantex sorting facility, the chips are useless for keeping track of garments or their wearer, Singer said.

"With this you get better quality. In turn, you get a better reputation," Singer said. "We built this company on reputation and referrals."

Singer is the third generation of his family to run the company, founded in 1923 as Grand Rapids Coat and Apron Services.

RFID technology gained greater prominence in 2003 when Wal-Mart Stores Inc. said it wants all suppliers to adopt the technology to better manage inventory.

By the end of this year, Wal-Mart wants to use RFID technology to track products at the pallet and carton level.

Eventually, the RFID could replace bar codes on individual packages. Imagine running a cart full of groceries through a check-out line without needing to put them on a conveyor.

The technology has been around for years and is used to make computerized cards to enter buildings, parking lots and ramps. But smaller and less expensive versions have made it feasible to deploy on a larger scale.

"It's going to take time for its acceptance, but it's one of the fastest growing technologies in the U.S. today, and it's going to get to the point when it's exponential," said Herb Markman, chief executive of Positek RFID in Norristown, Pa.

Positek sells RFID systems to companies such as Grantex.

People should be concerned about the potential for abuse of the technology, said Katherine Al-



It tells all: Gloria Moreno checks a garment's history using a computer to read the chip sewn into the shirt.

brecht, founder and director of CASPIAN, a consumer-advocacy group focusing on privacy issues.

It is not unthinkable that a company would install scanners in floors or doorways — even restrooms — to track employees, she said.

"It's things that people are actually spending real money to do already," she said.

At the least, employers should tell their workers about how RFID is being used, Albrecht said.

"It is just about as worrisome as having a tracking beacon in your flesh, because you are required by your employer to wear them, and you can't get away from them," she said.

Singer said he and Grantex Vice President Gordon Reynolds became interested in the chips after realizing how they could

simplify the task of tracking the company's thousands of uniforms, from Gaylord to Elkhart, Ind.

"It works better than I do," Singer said.

Less sorting time meant more efficiency, lower labor costs, more capacity and more time to spend with customers.

A few skeptical uniform wearers removed the tags, but the company was able to convince them the tags posed no danger to their privacy, Singer said.

"The first thing people thought we were doing is following and monitoring them by satellite," Reynolds said. "Really, only one or two people out of thousands were concerned."

Installing the 70-cent tags in Grantex's 270,000 garments took about six months.

Grantex spent more than \$3 million to add RFID and other automation when it moved into the Kent Industrial Center three years ago.

The efficiency gains, which also come from highly automated laundering systems, were dramatic. A garment that may have taken three to four days to process in the past can now be washed, sorted and ready to go in one day.

The company's capacity also more than doubled without the need for huge increases in its payroll.

Hundreds of people from many industries have visited Grantex to get a better understanding of the technology.

Grantex is "as aggressive of an RFID rollout as anybody has done," Markman said.

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