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CNN

August 19, 2009 Wednesday

SHOW: CNN NEWSROOM 9:00 AM EST

Dozens Killed in Baghdad Blast; Make or Break Maneuvering in Health Care; Process of Health Care Reform; Don't Cover the Violence; Health Care Concerns

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SECTION: NEWS; International

LENGTH: 8365 words

HIGHLIGHT: At least 75 people are dead after insurgents blast two Iraqi institutions in Baghdad. Democrats are planning to pass a health bill without the Republicans. President Obama still prefers the public option but some in his administration are hinting it is not the essence of the health care reform. The Afghan government has asked local and international media not to cover the violence on election day so people won't get scared to get out and vote. The health care reform proposals are seen to cover old people and those with disabilities but do not specify those that have autism. Hurricane Bill is now a Category 4 Storm with winds of 135 miles an hour. State Delegate John Cardin says he wanted to make his fiancée's night perfect.

DON LEMON, CNN ANCHOR: All right, thank you guys.

Breaking news, smoke rises over Baghdad. The Iraqi capital rocked by six bombings in a matter of minutes.

Cars toppled like toys -- a tornado tears right through Beaumont, Texas. Our severe weather coverage also updates hurricane Bill.

Plus, not model behavior. A blogger who verbally attacked a model will be outed.

Good morning, I'm Don Lemon. Heidi is off today. It is Wednesday, August 19th, and are you in the CNN NEWSROOM.

Health care reform, a make-or-break month, and what may and take it or leave it ultimatum. The stakes rise, the confrontations builds.

CNN's Elaine Quijano is at the White House with a bold move now being considering by Democrats. And our Dr. Sanjay Gupta is with me right here in the NEWSROOM to break it all down for you. He brings us a very unique perspective.

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He worked in the White House, the last time an administration tried to push through health care reform.

But first we start with breaking news out of Baghdad. Six bombings in one hour and at least 75 people are dead, hundreds more are wounded in this. Some blasts went off near government buildings. It is the worst day of carnage in the capital since Iraqi troops took over.

CNN's Arwa Damon joins us live now from Baghdad with the very latest on the developments. Arwa?

ARWA DAMON, CNN CORRESPONDENT: Good morning, Don. It has been a really devastating day here in Baghdad with that death toll that everyone fears is going to continue to rise.

The deadliest bombings, as you were saying, they're targeting Iraqi's government institutions. Two rock bombs, one exploding in front of Iraq's Ministry of Finance, the other in front of Iraq's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

That one, by far, the most devastating, literally blowing through the facade of the ten-story building. We did manage to get down to the scene of that explosion. Iraqi security forces there standing with expressions of sheer shock on their faces. Ambulances screaming by. Walking wounded and then those trying to save individuals whom they believed may have been trapped underneath the rubble.

This is the deadliest day in Iraq since the U.S. military completed the withdrawal of its combat forces from Iraqi cities and towns on June 30th. Since then the Iraqi government has very much been trying to tout itself as being under control, convince the Iraqi people that its forces are capable of securing this country.

But today the insurgents very much striking back and striking fear in the hearts of many that perhaps the Iraqis are not quite ready for this task just yet.

Also coming as the Iraqi government has been trying to put or decrease some of the security measures that were put into place. Removing blast walls from some area. In fact, in front of the Foreign Ministry where the deadliest bombing took place there used to be a checkpoint with bomb detection devices. That was recently had been removed and now the Iraqis are paying for the consequences. Don?

LEMON: Arwa Damon in Baghdad with our breaking news. Thank you, Arwa.

Now I want to get back to health care reform and what could be a very risky strong-arm maneuver by the Democrats. Our chief medical correspondent Dr. Sanjay Gupta brings us some special insights into this discussion. He served as a White House fellow during the Clinton years and witnessed firsthand a failed battle for health care reform.

But first a closer look now at the make-or-break move that the Democrats are considering. Want to go now to Elaine Quijano. She joins us at the White House. Elaine?

ELAINE QUIJANO, CNN WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT: Well, good morning, Don. Top Democrats close to the White House tell my colleague Ed Henry that, in fact, officials are now, quote, unquote, "actively considering" this option. It's basically an obscure budget move called reconciliation.

And what it would mean is that in the Senate, instead of needing 60 votes to get this legislation through, they'd only need a simple majority or 51 votes.

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Now we should note that no final decision has been made on this, and in fact this is an option that has been on the table all along.

But what's different now, of course, is the context. It's now August, we're just weeks away from when Congress gets back from the August recess. As you know, Don, the president is facing resistance, not just from Republicans, but also some skepticism from conservative Democrats as well. Don?

LEMON: What about the White House message? There's been criticism that the White House, not everyone in the White House is carrying the same message, therefore may be diluting the message, may be diluted and confusing the American people. And part of this whole thing that may be their own fault, part of the reason that Americans are confused and some of them are outraged. QUIJANO: Right. Well, one thing that happened over the weekend, as you know, Don, confusion over a public option. And what the administration's position was -- there were some comments by not just the president himself but also his Health and Human Services secretary, Kathleen Sebelius, that caused some progressives to say hey, wait a minute, is the White House now backing away from a public option?

Well, yesterday we heard from Robert Gibbs, we heard from the Health and Human Services secretary, Kathleen Sebelius, basically saying the administration's position has not changed on it, the president still believes that a public option is the best way to make sure there is choice and competition.

Those are the buzzwords here at the White House. Choice and competition are still going to be part of this health care reform system. But nevertheless some progressives still scratching their heads over those comments over the weekend when the president himself, in their view, made it sound as though a public option was in fact optional. Don?

LEMON: Yes. Mixed messages, some say. OK, Elaine Quijano following it for us at the White House. Thank you very much for that, Elaine.

Now let's look at the process of health care and for that I want to bring back in Dr. Sanjay Gupta. He's a White House fellow -- he was a White House fellow during the Clinton administration, again, offering us some unique perspective here.

There appears to be mixed messages, or at least some back-pedaling, when it comes to the public option here.

DR. SANJAY GUPTA, CNN CHIEF MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT: I think it was back-pedaling, and it was back-pedaling on the back-pedaling. You know what I mean? It was really interesting and somewhat difficult to cover for the journalists, I'll tell you as well.

What sort of really caught my attention was when President Obama said the public option is just a sliver of health care reform. I think many people who've been working on this for some time said it was really the basis for a lot of the health care reform. So that -- I think that was surprising. But then as Elaine just said, you know, you got some -- they're going back to saying, you know, public option is absolutely necessary.

What was interesting is that there a lot of people who say it's not reform without a public option. Unless you offer something like this you're not going to create the increase in competition.

LEMON: Same thing all over again.

GUPTA: That's right. You may have insurance reform but a lot of people who are critics of the public option say you don't need it, simply have strong insurance reform, continue this nondiscrimination based on pre-existing condi-

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tions, try and get the insurance companies to rein in costs, and you might achieve some of the same goals.

And therein, Don, after all these months, I think lies the friction.

LEMON: OK.

GUPTA: Definitely (INAUDIBLE).

LEMON: You know I want to get to this idea of co-ops in just a second. But you bring up a very good point. Because there are many people who are happy with the health care that they have. So why not just expand upon what we already have? Is that a consideration or does that make sense at all?

GUPTA: People have definitely talked about that. And the president has always said, to be clear, that if you are happy with what you have, if you have access to private insurance and your premiums are not above a certain percentage of your income, you stick with it. That's what you're going to stick with.

But he's also talked about this idea, for example, which I found interesting, expanding Medicare so people between the ages of 55 and 64, so an increased decade, could buy into Medicare at full price. He's also talked about Medicaid as a possibility of raising the income level at which someone would qualify for Medicaid.

Right now at a certain percentage, you could make more and still qualify for Medicaid at least under some of these proposals. So possibly. But you're absolutely right. This idea that you have the public option and the possible expansion of Medicare, possible expansion of Medicaid, is what has been discussed.

LEMON: Yes, and they're all proposals. And a lot of people think that there's, you know, already a bill that's got -- you know, they want to fight against this bill that's already there. But it's all just sort of proposals in the process.

GUPTA: Proposals. Yes.

LEMON: Just (INAUDIBLE) now. Let's talk about co-ops. Came up over the weekend. You know, Kathleen Sebelius made her thing saying over the weekend on John King, saying, you know what? It's not part of this private or single pay or what have you, it's only one part of the process. And then this idea of co-ops came out in the same day on John King's show. Is that a viable, really viable option?

GUPTA: It's non-government controlled, although it may take government money. It is non-profit as well. What happens is you buy into a co-op. Let's say you decide you want to do this. You not only get insured but you're also a member of the co-op.

LEMON: You can own it in the process.

GUPTA: Yes, you can own it. You can say, you know what? Let's discuss premiums, they're too high. Let's discuss coverage, let's get more. You know, whatever as a board member as well as an insured, that's what you are.

What was interesting to me, Don, is no one really seems to like this idea. The Democrats say you know what? This is giving up on the public option. And Republicans say this is still public option, just in disguise. So it seemed like a possible sort of threading the needle alternative, but I think part of the backpedaling that we were just talking about was because when you float it out there, no one seems to be in love for it except for a few people.

LEMON: Oh, boy. OK. So where do we go...

GUPTA: It's like going to medical school all over again.

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(CROSSTALK)

LEMON: You know I was thinking about co-ops, and it's the same as, you know, of many people in big cities, especially New York, own co-ops. You don't actually own the unit. You own part of a corporation.

GUPTA: That's right. And they'll tell you that it has to be of a certain size for it to be competitive. And you know, and they say about 500,000 people. If you don't have that many people, how are you going to compete against the private insurance industry?

LEMON: Sanjay, thank you very much. Stick around because we got a lot more questions like this.

GUPTA: All right.

LEMON: Sanjay is going to be working very hard for a long time here until we get this resolved. We want to know what you think on this latest twist. Is going it alone a good strategy for the Democrats? Going it alone. Is that a good strategy?

Go to CNN.com/heidi or CNN.com/don, or find me on Twitter, or Facebook. Don Lemon CNN on both and share your thoughts.

Don't cover the violence. The Afghan government appealing to the media just hours before the presidential election.

ROB MARCIANO, CNN METEOROLOGIST: Hurricane Bill now a (INAUDIBLE) to the category 4 strength. And the track of the forecast has shifted to the west. We'll talk about that. Plus southeast Texas got hammered yesterday. Tornadoes on the ground, damage and injuries. Weather is coming up.

LEMON: Hey, here's a story we're following for you this morning. The Democrats going it alone on health care. They don't want bipartisan support. Do you think that this is a good strategy?

If you think it's good or bad, whatever you have to say about it, go to CNN.com, or go to CNN.com, and then click on Heidi, slash Heidi, or slash Don. There it is right there. There's Heidi's space. There's (INAUDIBLE). There's mine.

CNN.com/don or CNN.com/heidi. Also you can reach us on Twitter, on Facebook. And we'll get your comments and your questions on the air. We appreciate them around here.

In the meantime, we have some other news to tell you about. This is coming from overseas. The Afghan government is calling on journalists not to cover attacks on Election Day. They are worried people won't show up to vote if they hear about the violence.

We are just getting word that seven election workers have been killed this week. Today police stormed a Kabul bank killing three armed robbers. Local media reported those men were Taliban members.

CNN's Atia Abawi joins us now live from Kabul with more on tomorrow's election. Hi, Atia.

ATIA ABAWI, CNN CORRESPONDENT: Hi, Don. Yes, tomorrow will be the second-ever presidential elections for Afghans. But the question remains will they even risk going out to the polls?

Violence has increased throughout the country, including the capital city of Kabul. Kabul considered one of the safest parts of the country. Just yesterday

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the second suicide car bombing in four days. At least 15 people have been killed in those car bombings.

And we've seen rockets launched into the city. We've seen suicide attackers. We've also seen -- we've also heard about that gun battle this morning. And the Taliban spokesperson says that wasn't it, that they have 20 suicide bombers infiltrating the capital city right now and it has many Afghans fearing, is it even worth heading to the polls tomorrow, because is it worth their lives?

Do they want their fathers to go? Do they want their mothers to go, brothers, sisters? They'd rather stay home because they think that their vote won't even count due to the fraud. Don?

LEMON: So now that we've talked about the government intimidation towards the media, Atia, I'm sure that's not the only thing that the Taliban has been doing to intimidate the people from heading to the polls.

ABAWI: Well, the problem with the people of Afghanistan right now, they're getting intimidation from every which way they go. The Taliban, they have threatened to chop off index fingers. When an Afghan person goes out to vote, they dip their finger in a bottle of ink. That's to show that they voted and they can't vote again.

It takes weeks for that ink to come off. And the Taliban says if they see that on anyone's finger, they will chop their fingers off. They've also threatened to cut their throats, they threatened to kill them, they threatened to attack polling stations.

The threats from the government right now is coming towards the journalists, both foreign and local journalists. We got an e-mail last night stating in English that they request that we refrain from reporting on violence tomorrow from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. because they're afraid that the Afghan people won't head to the polls if they hear about the violence.

And the Dari language of the e-mail, it was a requirement, and today our producers speaking to the spokesperson on the Foreign Ministry, he was told if the foreign media reports on violence during that time period, they would be kicked out of the country and Afghan media, they're organizations would be shut down. Don?

LEMON: All right. Atia Abawi, joining us. Thank you very much from Kabul this morning.

And here's more about the Afghan election. The incumbent president and 40 challengers are on the ballot. 17 million Afghans are registered to vote. International donors are helping pay for the \$223 million election. And 30 different groups, both domestic and international, will monitor for possible fraud.

So what are the big issues at stakes in this election and why should you care about something happening so far away? We're going to tell you. We're going to talk about that at the bottom of the hour. As a matter of fact, you should care about it.

Just like you should care about this story -- Bill, now a Cat 4. Rob, the folks along the east coast, should they be preparing? Is it going to be a fish storm or too soon to tell?

MARCIANO: We're hoping it's going to be a fish storm but it is too soon to tell, Don, with everything kind of lining up to where it's going to at least get close to the U.S. Northwest, looking at heat. East Coast looking at heat as well. Near 90 in Seattle. 92 degrees expected in New York City. Heat advisories out. That's weather that's affecting people right now.

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What could affect you in the coming days? Well, Hurricane Bill, now category 4, as Don mentioned. We have winds at 135 miles an hour, gusting to 160. Look at this well-defined eye right there. My goodness, this is about 30 miles in diameter. This thing is a beast.

Hurricane-force winds extend about 45 miles out. And then tropical storm-force winds extend even further out than that. So we're looking at a serious storm here.

Want to show you what's going on as far as the track of this thing. Here are forecast models, they have shifted a little bit to the west, at least a couple of them are. It does go west of Bermuda. And then what happened that re-curvature happens before it gets too close to New England.

Category 4, might even strengthen a little bit before it makes that turn. And there you go. New England is in the cone of uncertainty. So that certainly is something to keep in mind as we go through the next 24 to 48 hours.

And then look at this, Don. An F-1 tornado rode through southeast Texas yesterday, did some damage to a Kohl's and a Wal-Mart. Also a couple of people were hurt, no fatalities. But it's still severe weather season. Matter of fact, last night, parts of New York City got hit with a pretty good hailstorm as well.

So that's the action right now. We'll talk more about an hour.

LEMON: You mentioned that well-defined eye, that -- what does that tell you? Does mean it's the power of the storm or how compact it is?

MARCIANO: Well, you know, actually, smaller eyes can often whirl a storm around even quicker. So it doesn't necessarily determine how strong or where it is in the cycle. I'll tell you this, though, it is heading into an area that is conducive for more strengthening. So we'll see if that happens over the next 24 hours.

LEMON: Rob, we appreciate it. Thank you very much.

MARCIANO: You got it.

LEMON: Wanting to be heard in the debate over health care reform. Americans with disabilities, some have insurance, others have been denied. Our Dr. Sanjay Gupta takes a look at what might change.

LEMON: All right. We're working to bring you the very latest on health care, the showdown on Capitol Hill. And really all around the country. CNN has learned that Democrats may roll out a new tactic. It's an obscure budget maneuver that would allow them to pass a Senate measure with a simple majority of 51 votes, not the 60 that would normally be needed. In other words, not a single Republican vote would be needed in all of this.

Watching the debate, millions of Americans with disabilities, some, but not all, are covered by insurance. Back with us now is our "Insider," chief medical correspondent and practicing neurosurgeon, Dr. Sanjay Gupta. Say that three times fast.

First, Sanjay, we have this question from a viewer. I want you to listen to this, in Illinois, and we'll talk about it.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JAMES, CALLED FROM ILLINOIS: Hello, this is James Windings. I am in west Frankfurt. I just have a question about people that have disabilities. Will this health care reform affect us?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

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GUPTA: Well, James, first of all, thanks so much for calling in. We've been doing some homework on this. Some of this may be surprising to people out there. There's about 54 million Americans that have some sort of disability, a mental impairment, physical, visually impaired or hearing impaired.

And the vast majority of them or a lot of them don't have adequate insurance or are uninsured completely. Those who do have insurance are covered through Medicare and Medicaid. Some do have private insurance. So getting into these specifics, James, about what would happen under this proposed health care reform.

If you have Medicare and Medicaid there would really be no change in coverage but, James, in dying, what we sort of figured out, there's a lot of people sort of fall through the cracks. And here's why. Imagine yourself, you have some sort of disability. You make money but not enough to qualify for Medicaid but too little to actually pay all the medical expenses associated with your disability.

Therein lies the problem. That's why you get tens of millions of people sort of falling through the cracks. And this is how the White House said they would address that specifically. They say if you're uninsured or purchase private insurance, but again have a hard time affording it, you would not be discriminated against based on pre-existing conditions.

That's huge, Don, as you might imagine. Not bring discriminated against there. No annual caps for insurance premiums either, so get to August. You've run out of money and your insurance plan, that can't happen. There's no cap there. And making sure you have this choice between doctors and insurance plans.

Don, you know something I find really interesting is this Community Choice Act that says that hospital facilities have to all be wheelchair accessible. They're not all wheelchair accessible right now.

LEMON: And we should know, yes.

GUPTA: Hospital facilities -- and can you imagine that? A hospital facility -- so that may change as well under some of these bills that are coming out.

LEMON: So how does someone who's in a wheelchair get in? You have to get someone to lift them up in the steps?

GUPTA: I don't know. It surprised to me. The hospital that I work at is wheelchair accessible. But I can't imagine if you're someone who has -- is in a wheelchair, you go to a hospital, you'd expect that you're going to be able to get in.

LEMON: All right. That's why we you here, an "Insider, I want to talk about it. And you know, we talk about seniors and the disabled really paying close attention to this because they are the folks now who are really in this process and dealing with it right now.

Let's talk about another viewer said. Another viewer said, Sanjay, why does a HR-3200, which is the House plan, include reform for insurance coverage for autism treatment?

GUPTA: Great question as well. And this was very interesting to us because -- first, the writer is correct, we look through the whole 1,017 pages of this bill, don't see the word "autism" mentioned. So we kind of went out and starting doing some of our homework, talked to an organization, (INAUDIBLE), Autism Speaks.

And they say they were surprised, that there's not specific autism insurance reform as a part of this bill. That's the bottom line. Now what the White House

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will say is, look, if you look at the overall plan here, no pre-existing condition discrimination, cutting down on caps for insurance premiums, that's going to help the community that -- autism as well pay for their bills.

But 36 states right now don't offer behavioral/cognitive therapy that's covered by insurance. So very difficult. So I don't know if this is going to address it or not.

LEMON: And you know, as you and I know, get it in writing. And if -- they want it in writing, if you want to deal with -- if they want to have their issues dealt with, autism, it needs to be in that legislation as well.

GUPTA: That's right. Who -- again, who knows how this final bill will look. They may have it in there, but right now as far as we can tell, it doesn't.

LEMON: All right. Dr. Sanjay Gupta, thank you very much for that.

I want to tell you that if you want to learn more about the health care debate and how reforms could affect you and your family, check out our "Special Health Care in America" section. It's at CNN.com. It has the latest from the town hall debates, your iReports and all the fast facts, really everything you need to know.

Go to CNN.com/healthcare. Advice from Dr. Sanjay Gupta on there as well.

And speaking of fact check, our Josh Levs looking into something a lot of people say that they are worried about here. And what is on their minds, Josh? What are they talking about?

JOSH LEVS, CNN CORRESPONDENT: Don, they're asking me a lot about rationing. In fact, it's one of the things that you said. You can see here, CNN.com/healthcare, the latest from the CNN truth squad.

You've heard the arguments on the different sides. Will health care reform ultimately lead to government rationing? Well, the truth squad has taken a look and we have a verdict.

ANNOUNCER: Live in the CNN NEWSROOM, Don Lemon.

LEMON: Up one day, down the next. That is the way things have been going on Wall Street. All this week. And that pattern is likely to continue this morning. Look, it's up, though, today.

We're expecting a sharp drop at the opening -- at the open following yesterday's down day.

Susan Lisovicz is at the New York Stock Exchange. She has all the details.

Hi, Susan. You hear the bell right there.

(LAUGHTER)

SUSAN LISOVICZ, CNN CORRESPONDENT: And I think I hear your voice. Good morning, Don. Yes, nobody said that the dog days of summer would be completely exclusive of volatility.

And that's what we're seeing this week. As with Monday's sell-off, investors here are taking their cue from overseas markets. The Shanghai Composite tumbled more than 4 percent due to fears that the Chinese government's easy credit policy won't fuel a sustainable recovery. That's worrisome because China is a symbol of growth.

Also sitting confidence, a nearly 20 percent drop in Hewlett-Packard's quarterly profits. PC and printer ink sales remain weak. The company says it's too soon to say the situation is turning. HP shares right now are down 3 percent.

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A new top dog in the home building market. Shareholders approving Pulte's purchase of rival Centex. Management of both companies have urged shareholders to approve the deal. They said a bigger company would be stronger and survive the housing market downturn.

The price, by the way, nearly \$1.5 billion in stock.

And checking stocks, yes we're seeing a down turn and early trade in the DOW, the NASDAQ and S&P 500 each down about one percent.

But let's it end on a bright note, Mr. Lemon. You could have made quite a bit of money if you bought Google shares when the company went public five years ago. Today, that IPO priced at \$85 at their high. Google shares soared above \$700. Today, Google shares trading around \$445; a gain of 425 percent after five years -- woulda, shoulda, coulda.

And I'm actually saying that because I had the opportunity...

LISOVICZ: Still there for you...

LEMON: I'm still working right here. Susan, it's always good to see you. Thank you we'll check back ok.

LISOVICZ: Likewise.

LEMON: All right. Let's go overseas now to Afghanistan. It's about 12 hours away from holding only its second election since the overthrow of the Taliban back in 2001. Now, here's what we know right now.

Security is a very big concern. And the government has asked the media not to report on violence on Election Day to avoid scaring people away from the polls. Now, the Taliban has vowed to disrupt the election. The terrorist group has said it's behind several recent attacks.

Incumbent President Hamid Karzai is the front-runner. He faces about 40 challengers, including his former foreign minister who is the top challenger there.

Now to the front lines of tomorrow's election: CNN's Ivan Watson is on the ground for us in the central Afghanistan. It is a relatively peaceful part of the country but security is still a major concern. Ivan set the scene for us there.

IVAN WATSON, CNN INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENT: Hi Don, this -- compared to southern and eastern Afghanistan, and increasingly northern Afghanistan where the Taliban insurgency is so active and bloody, this is a virtual oasis of calm, Bamiyan province. And that's because the people who live here are an ethnic group called the Hazaras.

Don, they suffered greatly under the Taliban and you may be able to see behind -- you maybe to see over here the cave where a 150-foot tall Buddhist statue that dated back at least 15 centuries where it was destroyed by the Taliban more than eight years ago.

We went out with trucks delivering ballot boxes today for tomorrow's vote. Let's take a look at what we saw during that journey, Don.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

WATSON: We're in a convoy on a police truck. We're escorting this truck up ahead of us. In the dust you might be able to see it. And it's taking ballot boxes up to some of the polling stations here in Afghanistan's central Bamiyan province.

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As you can see, security is important here even though this is one of the safest provinces in the country. Despite that good track record, election workers say in some parts of the province, they've heard of armed men going house to house warning people not to vote.

And also there's been a spike in violence and insurgent attacks over the past three months as insurgents have tried to disrupt this election process.

Now you can tell the roads here are not paved. Despite the fact that Bamiyan is one of the safest provinces in the country, it's been spared the daily car bombs and roadside bombs that the south and the east of the country have seen and some of the assassination attacks.

It still hasn't really benefited from reconstruction. There are fewer than five miles, five kilometers of paved road, in this entire province. And that makes this election a real logistical challenge. You can see the posters over there of some of the candidates for provincial council and for president.

People here, they say they are going to participate in the elections tomorrow and there is a lot of support here for the incumbent President Hamid Karzai. In part, because some of the traditional ethnic Hazara leaders this is predominantly ethnic Hazara province, they have endorsed the incumbent President Hamid Karzai.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

WATSON: And Don, western officials I've talked to here they do predict that Hamid Karzai is expected to do quite well here. Well, I did talk to one shop keeper who said "I am not going to vote for that man. He promised to help rebuild my province and he hasn't done anything here." And he pointed at the unpaved road right outside his shop and the clinic across the street.

And he said eight years after the Taliban was overthrown there was a new clinic there but no doctors and no medicine -- Don.

LEMON: Ivan Watson, Bamiyan province in Central Afghanistan. Thank you very much.

An election taking place while war rages? A key test of democracy in Afghanistan. We'll talk to one expert on the region why tomorrow's vote is so crucial and why you should care about it.

And we're following new developments this morning on the Obama administration's battle for health care reform. There could be a major shift in strategy underway or at least under consideration. Top Democrats close to the White House tell CNN that they could push through a bill without Republican backing.

CNN's Ed Henry delivered details last night on "AC360."

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

ED HENRY, CNN SENIOR WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT: It is a budget maneuver, very obscure, known as reconciliation where they would only need a simple majority, get 51 votes instead of 60 votes, to push through health reform. Republicans would scream that this is a power grab, it's an underhanded move.

But White House officials privately are already laying the groundwork by saying, "Look, we've been working with Republicans for months. If they don't get something done in the next few weeks we're going to have to take drastic measures."

And in fact as one top advisor of the President put it to me, "If we have to push it through this way, no one's going to remember how messy it is. What

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they'll remember at the end of the day is that we got health care reform done." As his adviser said quote, "A win is a win."

And that's what people are going to remember, it'll be messy, but if they have to do it, they're not ready to pull a trigger yet but if they have to do it they think people will forget about the process and remember the substance.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

LEMON: All right, we're following the health care debate all morning and of course we're following and working all of our sources in Washington to try to get you the very latest and also the facts on what exactly is going on.

So when it comes to health care reform. We're being bombarded with TV ads, spin from Washington and a lot of stuff online as well. Here to help us sort through all the facts and the fiction and tell us what's really the facts in this, we don't want know what the fiction is right Josh, we're hearing about in this whole thing, rationing care, Josh.

JOSH LEVS, CNN CORRESPONDENT: Yes.

LEMON: What's that all about?

LEVS: It's become a big buzzword hasn't it?

LEMON: Yes it had.

LEVS: One thing we're doing at the squad which I really like is we're focusing largely on what we're hearing from viewers out there. In fact, zoom in on the screen for a second; I'm going to show you an example. We got this is from Jason Rogers in San Antonio, Texas, who asked us if care will be rationed under government-run health care system.

Well, you know the White House has set up what it's calling it's reality check and the White House is saying right here reform will stop rationing, not increase it. That is just their side of it.

Let's take a look at what President Obama said just the other day.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: So what we've proposed is not to reduce benefits, benefits on Medicare would stay the same. It's not to ration. What we are asking is that we eliminate some of the practices that aren't making people healthier.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

LEVS: Now, the president was talking about what's been proposed. And it's true if you look at what's been proposed, no one is proposing something that would be rationing.

However, it's not that simple. Take a look here of what I'm going to show you now on this graphics. From the **Cato Institute**, it's a non-profit think tank that leans libertarian. They've look at this and they've said, you know what, the costs of a government-run plan could ultimately skyrocket.

And you'll see the next screen the point they are making that if that would happen, they say, "since the government will be the only entity in their view with any incentive to actually control costs, the government will basically find itself, they say, having to ration care."

So our verdict here is on this next screen. And we're going with this in dispute. I know you might look at that and say, wait a second, there are two different sides, what are you giving me here?

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It's actually important. What we're giving you here is that even though the White House states as a fact that it will not ration care, that it will cut back on rationing or avoid some concerns about rationing, we cannot tell you definitively that that will ultimately be the case.

And Don, that's really important when you think about it. A lot of this stuff when it comes to health care reform is predictive, what will we see some day, what might happen. Depending on what passes, depending what the legislation is, concerns about will the government ration could exist for years to come and that could be something people watch out for.

LEMON: You know my nickname for you right -- the answer man?

LEVS: Oh, my goodness. You know what? I'm going to start compiling a list of these things.

LEMON: Josh, appreciate it.

LEVS: Thanks Don.

ROB MARCIANO, AMS METEOROLOGIST: I'm Rob Marciano in the Severe Weather Center, also the hurricane headquarters. We have a hurricane. Bill now a Category 4. What are the chances of it hitting the U.S.? Weather still to come.

CNN NEWSROOM is coming right back.

LEMON: Ok. Some developing news here: a wave of explosions in Baghdad. Six blasts in one hour. It is the deadliest day since U.S. troops handed over security to the Iraqis. Authorities say at least 75 people were killed and more than 400 wounded. Government buildings and commercial buildings were hit. Iraqi official say two suspects believed to be senior leaders of al-Qaeda in Iraq are under arrest.

Now in Afghanistan: Afghanistan's second presidential election ever happening tomorrow. In the middle of a rising tide of Taliban violence in the country, it's happening. Coalition forces have made a big push against the militants in the south, though security is still a concern nationwide.

Joining us to talk about all of this, this election, why it's so important, is Daniel Markey. He's former U.S. State Department official and currently with the Coalition on Foreign Relations.

Thank you, sir, for joining us.

My first question to you has to be this. Obviously it is terrible that people are losing their lives. And if it's indeed because they don't want people to go to the polls, that's terrible because they should be able to vote.

But why should the average person if you're listening on Sirius, watching on CNN right now, why should we care about that?

DANIEL MARKEY, SENIOR FELLOW, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS: Well, the average American should be worried because the entire project in Afghanistan, the reason why we have tens of thousands of troops there, is based on the idea that eventually we'll get a stable and effective government. And this election is one piece in that process.

If it's thoroughly discredited by the Taliban, if it leads to more instability, then the political side of the equation won't come together and the military side won't be enough to hold Afghanistan together over the longer term.

LEMON: Is it indeed true that the Taliban, whoever's doing this -- and the government is saying that it is the Taliban -- they're doing this to keep people away from the polls or is that just Karzai saying that for his own good?

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MARKEY: I think they're certainly trying to keep people away from the polls; they're trying to, again, discredit the entire process. And I think they're also playing to an international audience. They're playing to your viewers to try to show them this is an unwinnable war and to demonstrate that to the world and to presumably change minds in various capitals in Europe and back here in Washington.

LEMON: Is it Hamid Karzai's own fault? He has been criticized for not being effectual at all when it comes to rooting the Taliban or even trying to reach across to see if in any way that he can coerce them into not being so violent. Programs that he's put into place have come under fire saying they weren't effective at all and nothing really happened. Is it his own fault?

MARKEY: It's partially Karzai's fault. His government has been seen as both corrupt and ineffective. A number of his political challengers are taking him to task for that. But I think we should be clear, this has been a failure over years by both Karzai, the international community, the United States. Afghanistan is an incredibly challenging project and we can't lay all the blame at Karzai's feet.

LEMON: We should also care, too, as well because didn't the President just commit more troops to going to Afghanistan. So our men and women are -- their lives are on the line there.

MARKEY: Absolutely, no question. We should care about those troops and we should also care about stability in Afghanistan so we don't see a return to something that looks like pre-9/11 Afghanistan.

LEMON: Karzai is the front runner. Does it look in this election like he going to end up being the winner here?

MARKEY: It does look like he'll eventually win. The one real question that I think a lot of analysts have is whether he can win in this first round of voting where he would need to get 50 percent of the vote. Some polls suggest he's more at 40 percent, 45 percent of the vote which would cause a run-off in about another month. That period of a month could be a very difficult time in Afghanistan.

LEMON: I was going to ask you that. I only have a short time left. If he does win, then what happens? If he doesn't win, I hate to say this, but are we looking at sort of instability comparatively as to what's going on in Iran?

MARKEY: Well, in Iraq, I think basically Afghanistan is going to see a heavy period of fighting no matter what happens in this political process. The injection of more troops, U.S. troops, in the south is forcing a lot of violence down there.

LEMON: I meant Iran; the unrest in Iran is what I was talking about. I didn't mean Iraq.

MARKEY: Oh. In Iran.

LEMON: I just meant unrest for people disputing the election.

(CROSS TALK)

MARKEY: I'm sorry, I didn't understand. Yes, there is potential for widespread public unrest particularly if they perceive that the election came off in a thoroughly corrupt way. If Karzai were to announce that he had 60 percent, 70 percent, 80 percent of the vote after this election, I don't think many people would believe it. I think a lot of his chief contender's Abdullah Abdullah supporters would probably come to the streets.

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LEMON: Daniel Markey, we appreciate it. Thank you.

MARKEY: Absolutely. Thank you.

LEMOND: Let's head now to our meteorologist in the CNN Severe Weather Center, keeping track of all that is going on, including Bill. Right? Big storm.

ROB MARCIANO, AMS METEOROLOGIST: Yes. This is a big storm, Don. With winds of 135 miles an hour we certainly have to contend with this.

It is only about 400 miles -- less than that now actually from the Leeward Islands, Antigua, Barbuda, those areas. And this eye is about 30 miles wide in diameter, it seemed to be getting more well-defined here in the last couple of hours.

The forecast is for it to get into some slightly warmer waters here and also less in the way of winds that will upset it. So it could even get stronger than it is and unlikely to become a Category 5, but who knows? I mean at one point we didn't think we'd get to Category 4 status.

More importantly, where is this thing going to go? Here's the realm (ph) of the thing. It hasn't changed a whole lot from yesterday. Kind of sneaks up this weakness in the ridge; it gets blocked a little bit by an approaching cold front. But if the front doesn't get there soon enough, that will allow Bill to get closer to the east coast, maybe even make a landfall there.

Right now though our computer models are not saying that, and national hurricane forecast does bring it actually; keeps it Category 4 strength. Actually it does increase its strength to about 145 miles an hour. You might be seeing that right now.

3 or 4 as it shoots the gap between Bermuda and the Carolinas and then a sharp right-hand turn to the right. Notice the cone of uncertainty does skim the Eastern Seaboard of New England. That's got us a little bit on edge right now especially if it shifts over towards the west.

One other item of concern is this -- all this mess is what's left of Ana which still is not forecast to develop but it will be drifting into the Gulf of Mexico. So we'll have watch that very carefully as well.

That's the latest from the tropics. Big heat across the East Coast, West Coast, next to the south and that summertime heat, so stay cool out there.

LEMON: You talked about the tornado damage and all of that happening down in Texas. Right?

MARCIANO: Yes, big tornado damage. Check out some of this video. I know we don't have for it but it is impressive. These cars outside of a Wal-Mart parking lot being tossed and turned around and dragged out. Also a Kohl's parking lot in Beaumont, Texas. The golden triangle there getting hit with an F-1 tornado yesterday, winds over 120 miles an hour there and certainly doing some damage.

Severe weather in inland states also a problem -- Don.

LEMON: Thank you, Rob. Appreciate it.

A Maryland lawmaker in hot water for creating the perfect romantic setting. Why? On bended knee, could mean much more than a marriage proposal.

LEMON: Heidi's off today, I'm Don Lemon.

We're taking your comments on the Democrats saying that they may go it alone to try push this health care bill through. Let's see what some of you were saying. Twitter here.

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DocMarty (ph) here says, "Finally, the Dems have taken a page from the Repubs or the Reps handbook used for 8 years; 51 votes to pass everything from now on.

Let's see what you're saying on our blog here. It says, "We're watching you in Civics Class in Oakridge, Tennessee. Not sure why the Dems would push this unpopular bill risking midterm havoc to their majority.

Let's see if I could get one more for you from the blog. This one says, "The Dems have been going it alone, what's changed? It's about time."

Thank you, logon to cnn.com and go to Heidi or Don on cnn.com and you can send us your thoughts. Or just go to cnn.com/newsroom and go to our blog. You can click on our face, Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, iReport.com will also get your comments.

Grounding adults in New Jersey? Grounding adults -- that's what I said. It sounds extreme, but officials in Patterson are considering a citywide curfew for everyone after a series of deadly summer shootings. The curfew would last for two months and it would bar any loitering between midnight and 7:00 a.m. Penalties could include a \$2,000 fine and 90 days in jail. If it passes, legal experts say it could lead to a whole bunch of lawsuits.

A model who was slammed with a bunch of derogatory comments online is a step closer to finding out who posted them. A New York Supreme Court judge ruled a Liskula Cohen (ph), Canadian-born model has the right to know who her online heckler was. She'd done shoots for "Vogue" and other fashion magazines and the comments were posted on blogger.com, Googles blogging service. The judge ordered Google to hand over any information on the bloggers identity.

Google released this comment. It says, "We sympathize with anyone who may be the victim of cyber bullying. We also take great care to respect privacy concerns and will only provide information about a user in response to a subpoena or other court order."

Does this mean the end of the blogging, of free speech online? We want to know what you think. Does it mean that? People who are blogging -- should they have the same standards as journalists? We want to know.

A whole lot of people could be outed by this.

Make sure you join us to talk about this. We're going to talk about the legal ramifications in just a few minutes here on CNN. Also you can go online here, go to our newsroom blog. Send us your comments and we will try to address them and get them on the air for you.

Cnn.com/heidi, cnn.com/don, find me on Twitter or Facebook. Please share your thoughts with them, with us. We appreciate them around here.

We have a lot going on in the next hour of THE NEWSROOM. Our correspondents are in place to bring it all to you.

Let's check in first with our Christine Romans. She is in New York. Hi Christine. CHRISTINE ROMANS, CNN BUSINESS CORRESPONDENT: Hi there, Don. Have you noticed that your credit card interest rates might be rising? No surprise. It has been happening in the first six months of this year. We're going to tell you why. We're also going to tell you about new -- important new rules for consumers that go in effect starting tomorrow that could help your credit cards and what the unintended consequences might be.

SUSAN LISOVICZ, CNN CORRESPONDENT: I'm Susan Lisovicz at the New York Stock Exchange where we're expecting UBS to name names; nearly 4,500 of them. The

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Swiss banking giant is being forced to reveal the names of Americans who hid money in secret overseas account. Don, more on that in the next hour.

MARCIANO: I'm Rob Marciano in your hurricane headquarters. Bill now a Category 4, hurricane hunters en route to the National Hurricane Center. We'll have an update in the next hour. That's coming up in the CNN NEWSROOM -- Don.

LEMON: Thanks to you all.

Why Americans paid so much for prescription drugs. Our Dr. Sanjay Gupta looks at how the government is dealing with that question in the reform debate.

LEMON: He pulled out all the stops. What's wrong with that when you're proposing? He wanted her to say I do. But now a Maryland lawmaker is saying, "I'm sorry."

Terry Owens from our affiliate WMAR tells us how this guy may have used his clout and city resources to create the perfect setting for his marriage proposal.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

TERRY OWENS, WMAR REPORTER: State Delegate John Cardin says he wanted to make his fiancée's night perfect. His plan, to propose to her on a boat on August 7th but that proposal apparently involved having a Baltimore city police department helicopter hover overhead as city marine police pretended to search the boat.

No one is saying how that was arranged. But police commissioner Fred Bealefeld has ordered an investigation. He wants to know if this was more than just a case of bad judgment.

FRED BEALEFELD, BALTIMORE POLICE COMMISSIONER: I don't know, though, that this is much beyond the scope of a couple of officers who used poor judgment and I'm going to reserve much more comment until I know more of the facts.

OWENS: The commissioner also wants to know why he's only hearing about it now, even though state employees had been talking about it for a while. Apparently, it was the talk of last week's mako convention in Ocean City. The commis(ph) obviously frustrated that this is happening at a time when budget cuts threaten the mounted and marine units.

Bealefeld is hopeful that people believe the police department is doing everything it can to stop waste.

BEALEFELD: I think people will put this in context and I think they will understand bad judgment or human error differently than they would understand systemic waste.

OWENS: Delegate Cardin has already contacted the department about reimbursing the city for its cost.

BEALEFELD: He has contacted me and he offered an apology for putting the Baltimore Police Department in this kind of predicament and spotlight.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

LEMON: That was Terry Owens from our affiliate WMAR. And just in case you are wondering, Cardin's fiancée said yes.

LOAD-DATE: August 20, 2009

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

TRANSCRIPT: 081901CN.V11

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DOCUMENT-TYPE: SHOW

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Transcript

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