

**War in Iraq** | Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is unharmed in the attack

By **GASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA**  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD — A rocket landed near the prime minister's office today during the first visit to Iraq by the head of the United Nations in nearly a year and a half, sending Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon ducking unharmed behind a podium at a news conference.

The attack came as Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's government said it had been negotiating with Sunni insurgents for months, and the U.S. military said that it had released a senior aide to Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr on al-Maliki's request.

The rocket caused no injuries but rattled the building in the heavily guarded Green Zone, sent small chips of debris floating from the ceiling and left a three-foot-wide crater about 50 yards away outside.

It struck right after al-Maliki, standing next to Ban, had finished telling reporters that Ban's visit was a sign that Iraq was on the road to stability.

"We consider it a positive message to (the) world in which you confirm that Baghdad has returned to playing host to important world figures because it has made huge strides on the road toward stability," al-Maliki said in his opening remarks.

Ban had just finished giving an answer to a question, and it was being translated into Arabic as the rocket struck with a big explosion.

He appeared frightened, casting his eyes right and left as he

rose after ducking behind the podium where he was standing and answering questions with al-Maliki. A worried-looking Ban turned to one of his aides and asked: "Is it OK?"

Al-Maliki told his security guards, "Nothing's wrong," as one of them moved to grab him. He then proceeded to answer a question and while that response was being translated, he turned to Ban and asked: "That's enough?"

"Yes," he replied.

The last visit to Iraq by the head of the U.N. was in November 2005, by Ban's predecessor, Kofi Annan.

The United Nations headquarters in Baghdad was bombed by militants on Aug. 19, 2003, and 22 people died, including the top U.N. envoy, Sergio Vieira de Mello. The U.N.'s international staff withdrew from Iraq in October 2003 after a second assault on its offices and other attacks on humanitarian workers. A small staff has gradually been allowed to return since August 2004.

The U.S. said it believed that the peace process could be helped by Ahmed al-Shibani, who was captured in the holy Shiite city of Najaf during fierce clashes in 2004 between U.S. forces and al-Sadr's Mahdi Army militia, which has largely cooperated with a new security push by U.S. and Iraqi forces.

The government released a photograph showing al-Maliki receiving a smiling al-Shibani at his office, underlining the ties between the prime minister and al-Sadr. Al-Sadr's support kept al-Maliki in his job last year, since the cleric's loyalists have 30 of parliament's 275 seats and six Cabinet posts.

The U.S. military said it had determined that al-Shibani



U.S. Army soldiers set up razor wire Wednesday in Baghdad's Sunni neighborhood of Ghazaliyah.

"could play a potentially important role in helping to moderate extremism and foster reconciliation in Iraq."

Authorities imposed an indefinite curfew on the southern city of Basra after clashes between the Mahdi Army and the rival Shiite Fadhila party, which recently withdrew from al-Maliki's government.

Police said the Mahdi militia-men fought Fadhila guards outside party headquarters, capturing eight before the building caught fire. Twelve Mahdi Army fighters were wounded, they said.

Clashes also erupted near the residence of Basra's Fadhila governor, Mohammed al-Waeli, and continued into the afternoon.

The clashes came days after British forces pulled out of the city in January of five American soldiers in the holy city of Karbala by gunmen speaking English,

wearing U.S. military uniforms and carrying American weapons.

The military said the arrests of Qais Khazaali, his brother Laith Khazaali and several other members of the network took place over the past three days.

On Wednesday, two senior Mahdi Army commanders told The Associated Press that Qais al-Khazaali was the leader of up to 3,000 fighters who defected from the militia and were now financed directly by Iran and no longer loyal to firebrand cleric Muqtada al-Sadr.

Saad Youssef al-Mutallabi, of the Ministry of National Dialogue and Reconciliation, told the AP in a telephone interview that talks with Sunni insurgent groups were initiated at the request of the insurgents and have been taking place inside and outside Iraq over the past three months.

He refused to identify the groups but said they did not include al-Qaida in Iraq or Saddam Hussein loyalists. Members of the former president's out-

group would be required to carry a two-way communication device, such as a cell phone, and one of the following: a global positioning system receiver, personal locator beacon transmitter, or a mountain locator unit or another comparable device.

Lim tried to delay the starting date until 2010, but the bill as written — if approved by the Senate and not vetoed by the governor — would kick in Jan. 1.

Lim's idea got a boost in February, when another trio of climbers carrying locator units seat belts or life jackets. "Carrying a device that could save your life is worthwhile," said Rep. Jerry Krummel, R-Wilsonville.

The regulation would apply to climbers on Mount Hood above 10,000 feet, from November through March. A person or

Eight Democrats, including House speaker Jeff Merkley of Portland, joined 14 Republicans in voting no.

Rocky Henderson, a member of Portland Mountain Rescue, said he was outraged at legislators' inconsistent actions. Earlier Wednesday, they voted down a proposal requiring people riding all-terrain vehicles to wear helmets.

"I'm going to work diligently to make sure to defeat this bill," he said.

The bill heads to the Senate, where the office of Senate President Peter Courtney declined to comment on its chances. Gov. Ted Kulongoski has not taken a position on the issue, said his spokesman Jake Weigler.

Janie Har: 503-221-8213; janiehar@news.oregonian.com

# Democrats ante up for campaign

**2008 race** | Early in the White House fundraising marathon, Democrats are leaving Republicans in the dust

By **ADAM NAGOURNEY**  
NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

DES MOINES, Iowa — For anyone looking for a sign of the health of the Democratic Party going into the 2008 presidential campaign, it came Wednesday with the last of the fundraising figures reported by the major presidential primary candidates.

With the \$25 million reported by Sen. Barack Obama's campaign, closing in on Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton's \$26 million, the Democratic presidential candidates collectively outperformed the Republicans by a substantial amount: Democrats raised about \$78 million, compared with just more than \$51 million by their rivals, according to preliminary first-quarter figures provided by the campaigns.

That is remarkable because Republicans have historically proved better at collecting contributions. In every presidential primary season since 1976, the top fundraiser was a Republican.

The new numbers offered what even Republicans described as measurable evidence that Democrats today are more confident about their prospects of winning back the White House, and — not typically for their party — satisfied with their candidates. That enthusiasm gap is emerging as one of the early dynamics of the 2008 presidential campaign.

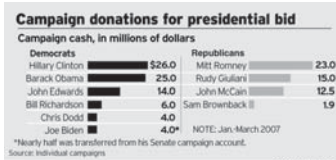
"The Democrats seem to have a lot more hunger for the White House right now than we do," said Scott Reed, who managed the presidential campaign of Bob Dole, a Kansas Republican, in 1996. "Part of it on the Republican side may be Bush fatigue. But clearly, the Republicans are going to need to get it together on finances if we are going to compete with the likes of Obama or Hillary Clinton. It's a concern."

Officials of both parties as well as some independent analysts said the figures quantified a trend apparent in Iowa and New Hampshire, where Democratic presidential candidates consistently draw crowds at rallies and house parties.

"This reflects on the part of Democrats not only their view of the prospects of victory in 2008, but also how they are coming off this rush of the 2006 elections,"



Collecting \$25 million for his presidential campaign, Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., on Wednesday affirmed his status as leading rival to Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-N.Y., in the Democratic primary races.



said Costas Panagopoulos, a political science professor at Fordham University. "In terms of Republican candidates, voters are feeling like they have to choose from a list of who represents the least of all evils."

## Democrats' momentum

The initial Democratic fundraising advantage seems to be the next step in a shift that began in 2004, when Democratic presidential candidates, starting with Howard Dean, tapped into the Internet to collect money from first-time contributors. It continued in the 2006 midterm elections when Democratic congressional campaign committees matched or beat their Republican counterparts, helping Democrats to take control of Congress.

"This is the continuation of a trend of an energized and engaged Democratic base that I think both Obama and Clinton are tapping into and that other Democrats, at the congressional and local levels, are going to be

able to tap into," said David B. Magleby, a political science professor at Brigham Young University.

If there is a bright side for Republicans, it is that Democrats, particularly Obama and Clinton, have enough money to inflict a considerable amount of damage on their fellow Democrats in the nine months before they settle in for the Iowa caucuses that lead off the primary voting.

And it is still many financial quarters before the general election. Even Democrats who described themselves as delighted by the results said they had no doubt that the Republican nominee will have more than enough money to compete in the general election.

## Early in the game

"I don't think the Republicans are going to lose the presidential election next year because of a lack of money," said David Plouffe, the manager of Obama's campaign.

Still, that may prove to be

small comfort. The Republican who had been viewed as his party's leading candidate, Sen. John McCain of Arizona, raised about half of what Clinton and Obama reported raising and trailed even the \$14 million raised by John Edwards, the North Carolina Democrat making his second bid for the Democratic nomination.

Beyond that, the Republican's top fundraiser, Mitt Romney of Massachusetts, has trailed in national polls in part because he is not widely known, but also because he has been repeatedly attacked by his rivals for changing his positions on central issues including abortion and gay rights.

In this unsettled environment it is no surprise that this year, the Republicans, not the Democrats, seem hungry to find someone else to get into the race, as reflected by the interest drawn by the potential candidates of the unrelated Thompsons: Fred of Tennessee and Tommy of Wisconsin.

And the release of financial figures has offered a statistical basis to support anecdotal evidence that Democrats are more optimistic about winning the White House. Democrats as a rule have been drawing much bigger crowds than Republicans.

By contrast, Republicans show few signs of pulling out of the doldrums that followed their defeat in the November election. Reed, the former Dole adviser, suggested that that, combined with opposition to the war and Bush's low popularity ratings, was sapping the energy of voters in his party.

The Democrats' figures left no question that Clinton faces a fundraising equal in Obama.

At the same time, Edwards trailed significantly behind Clinton and Obama, evidence of just how important it is for him to score an early win in Iowa before the race moves to the broad and expensive national field of the Feb. 5 primaries.

The news might be worse in the second Democratic tier. Sen. Joseph R. Biden Jr. and Sen. Christopher J. Dodd both struggled to raise money, despite their credentials and networks, which might prove troublesome for them as they seek continued support.

Magleby, of BYU, said he suspected Republicans were suffering from donor fatigue. In the quarters to come, the prospect of another President Clinton could certainly get Republicans to take out their checkbooks.

**Search and rescue** | A bill requiring climbers to carry the devices goes to the state Senate

By **JANIE HAR**  
THE OREGONIAN

SALEM — Climbers on Mount Hood would be required to carry a locator device under a bill endorsed by the Oregon House on Wednesday.

Representatives approved House Bill 2509 by a 33-22 vote after lengthy floor speeches on personal responsibility, government mandates, rescue costs and saving lives.

Rep. John Lim, a Republican from Gresham, introduced the bill after three experienced climbers died on Mount Hood in December. None carried a locator device.

Climbers and rescuers, for the most part, oppose the bill. They say most experienced mountaineers already carry such devices and that the units could spark risky behavior in some climbers by giving them a false sense of security.

"They are opposed to mandates without teeth and one that disregards their opinion," said Rep. Chuck Burley, R-Bend, in opposing the bill.

Supporters called the proposal a common-sense public safety regulation, much like mandating seat belts or life jackets. "Carrying a device that could save your life is worthwhile," said Rep. Jerry Krummel, R-Wilsonville.

The regulation would apply to climbers on Mount Hood above 10,000 feet, from November through March. A person or

group would be required to carry a two-way communication device, such as a cell phone, and one of the following: a global positioning system receiver, personal locator beacon transmitter, or a mountain locator unit or another comparable device.

Lim tried to delay the starting date until 2010, but the bill as written — if approved by the Senate and not vetoed by the governor — would kick in Jan. 1.

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Democrats provided most of the "yes" votes for the bill, but the issue crossed party lines.

## Latest spending plan would boost savings

**Washington** | Senate Democrats propose more money for health care and education

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

OLYMPIA — Senate Democrats on Wednesday offered a new two-year state budget plan that would spend heavily on schools, colleges, health

care and education. The bill approved a spending plan that would leave \$654 million on the table, none of it in a rainy day account.

The overall House spending level would be \$33.4 billion.

The Senate's new counterproposal would spend about \$100 million less and pad the reserves accordingly — \$607 million in unrestricted savings,

## House firmly rejects ATV helmet mandate

**Safety** | The state's Parks and Recreation Department doubts other bills will pass

By **JEFF MANNING**  
THE OREGONIAN

The Oregon House on Wednesday resoundingly defeated a bill that would have made it mandatory for all-

She was not wearing a helmet.

Nationally, ATV deaths and injuries are running at record rates. More than 750 people lost their lives and 135,000 were injured in 2005.

HB2062 was one of four ATV safety bills introduced this session at the request of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. The others would prohibit ATV riders from carrying pas-

# Goalpost Shape

2 col. x 21.5" left, 9 col. x 6" center, 2 col. x 21.5" right

Total: 140 col. inches

6"

23.25"