

## THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISM

## Iraq's new parliament finally to meet



Iraqi police take away a damaged vehicle from Interior Minister Bayan Jabr's convoy in Baghdad, Iraq, on Wednesday. Jabr was not in the convoy.

## Interior ministry officials' convoys attacked in Baghdad

By ALEXANDRA ZAVIS  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

## BAGHDAD, Iraq

In what may prove to be a double-edged sword, Iraq's Shiite vice president finally agreed Wednesday to sign a presidential decree calling parliament into session.

Adil Abdul-Mahdi's signature cleared the way for the much-delayed first session as early as Sunday, a required step toward forming a new government.

Abdul-Mahdi's signature, with-

held since Monday, was necessary to put President Jalal Talabani's decree on parliament into effect.

The dispute centers on Shiite Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari's bid for a second term, which is opposed by a coalition of Sunni Arab, Kurdish and secular Shiite politicians led by Talabani, a Kurd.

The president has openly challenged al-Jaafari's candidacy on grounds he is too divisive and would be unable to form a government representing all Iraq's reli-

gious and ethnic factions.

The apparent political breakthrough coincided with a day of grisly violence during which police and the U.S. military reported finding the bodies of 24 men garroted or shot in the head.

And gunmen wearing uniforms of the Interior Ministry stormed a security company spiriting away 50 hostages. The ministry denied involvement and called the operation a "terrorist act."

Interior Minister Bayan Jabr and one of his assistants may

themselves have been targets of assassination attempts Wednesday.

A bomb hidden under a parked car detonated as police from Jabr's protection force were driving through Baghdad, killing two officers and wounding a third, police said.

And gunmen attacked the convoy of Interior Ministry Undersecretary Hekmet Moussa in Baghdad, killing two bodyguards and injuring two others, police said.

Neither Jabr nor Moussa were in the convoys.

## PORT SECURITY



House Armed Services chairman Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., conducts a news conference on a bill he is submitting in reaction to the

Dubai ports deal on Capitol Hill Tuesday. With him are Rep. Jim Saxton, R-N.J., center, and Rep. Frank LoBianco, R-N.J.

## GOP committee votes to block ports deal

## House Republicans defy president's veto threat

By LIZ SIDOTI  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

## WASHINGTON

In an election-year repudiation of President Bush, a House panel dominated by Republicans voted overwhelmingly Wednesday to block a Dubai-owned firm from taking control of some U.S. port operations. Democrats clamored for a vote in the Senate, too.

By 62-2, the House Appropriations Committee voted to bar DP World, run by the government of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, from holding leases or contracts at U.S. ports.

Bush has promised to veto any such measure passed by Congress, but there is widespread public opposition to the deal and the GOP fears losing its advantage on the issue of national security in this fall's elections.

"This is a national security issue," Rep. Jerry Lewis, the chairman of the House panel, said, adding that the legislation would "keep America's ports in American hands."

As the committee acted, Democrats on the other side of the Capitol maneuvered for a vote in the GOP-led Senate. Republican leaders said they would hold a procedural vote aimed at heading off the Democratic effort as early as today.

"We believe an overwhelming majority will vote to end the deal," said Democrat Charles Schumer of New York, whose attempt to force the issue to the floor brought the Senate to a late-afternoon standstill.

Congressional supporters of the deal are few and far between, conceded Sen. John Warner, R-Va., an administration supporter.

GOP Senate leaders hope to delay a quick showdown with Bush on the issue, but the House committee, led by members of Bush's own party, showed a willingness to defy him on a security issue in an age of terrorism.

The panel attached the ports language to a must-pass \$91 billion measure financing hurricane recovery and wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The full House could consider that measure as early as next week.

"One of the most vulnerable situations facing America is our ports of entry," said Rep. Bill Young, R-Fla., chairman of the House defense appropriations subcommittee. "Whoever's responsible for those ports of entry should be American."

Rep. Marcy Kaptur, D-Ohio, said allowing the DP World takeover to proceed and ignoring the public outcry over it would be irresponsible.

"The American people elected us to do something when an issue like this comes up," she said.

Only Reps. Jim Kolbe, R-Ariz., and Jim Moran, D-Va., voted against the measure.

"It is premature, we don't have enough information and ... it may turn out to be unnecessary," Moran said. Added Kolbe: "I just don't think this is the right thing to do."

The House and Senate developments underscored the extent to which the politically charged issue has come to dominate the agenda in recent days, with Republicans and Democrats competing to demonstrate the strongest anti-terrorism credentials in the run-up to midterm elections.

White House spokeswoman Dana Perino said, "We are committed to open and sincere lines of communication and are eager to work with Congress."

However, she also said the administration was concerned that attempts to address the DP World deal in the emergency spending bill could delay money needed for U.S. troops and for hurricane victims on the Gulf Coast.

Republicans worked to prevent a vote in the Senate as an aide to Majority Leader Bill Frist said the Tennessee warned Treasury Secretary John Snow "the president's position will be overruled by Congress" if the administration fails to aggressively and clearly communicate with lawmakers during a 45-day review that is in progress.

## Prisoners' rights remain unsettled

## Volunteer lawyers examine records

By DAVID KRAVETS  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hundreds of volunteer lawyers representing prisoners at Guantanamo Bay are scouring more than 5,000 pages of newly released documents for clues they hope may one day help win the detainees' freedom.

Many of the attorneys said the documents could help locate or identify witnesses or finally prove to family members that a loved one is being held at the U.S. military prison in Cuba.

Still, it is far from clear what legal rights the 500 or so prisoners have to contest their detention in U.S. courts, and how much use they can make of the new documents.

"The most frustrating part of it, these guys are wasting away in Guantanamo while the courts go about this process of sorting out their rights," said attorney Eldon Greenberg, who is representing two young Syrians detained as enemy combatants for more than four years.

The documents were released by the Bush administration last week after The Associated Press sued under the Freedom of Information Act. They provide a glimpse into annual threat-assessment hearings and Combat



A detainee is escorted by military police at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base on Aug. 26, 2004, in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Status Review Tribunals, during which detainees are often pronounced "enemy combatants" — a status the administration says means they can be held indefinitely without charges.

The released documents consist mostly of transcripts of these proceedings.

In them, some of the men openly espouse hatred of the United States, while others assert their innocence.

Salih Uyar of Turkey was accused of living with a known al-Qaida member for two months, but says he was in Afghanistan sightseeing. He was also accused of wearing a type of Casio watch that the U.S. government says had been used in bombings.

## Pentagon placing troops in embassies

By ROBERT BURNS  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

## WASHINGTON

The U.S. military command in charge of counterterrorism campaigns is putting small teams of special operations troops in U.S. embassies to support the global war on terror, officials said Wednesday.

The presence of these teams, which began at least two years ago but has not been publicly announced by U.S. Special Operations Command, was first reported in Wednesday's edition of The New York Times.

The special operations troops do not operate under cover. They are present with the knowledge of both the U.S. ambassador and the host government, officials said.

Navy Lt. Cmdr. Steve Mavica, a spokesman for Special Operations Command in Tampa, Fla., said the teams are known as "military liaison elements" and operate as single individuals or

small groups. They work for the U.S. commander responsible for the region in which they are located. That would mean any based in U.S. embassies in the Middle East would report to Gen. John Abizaid, the commander of U.S. Central Command.

The teams play a key role in coordination and planning in connection with security efforts and counterterrorism, Mavica said. He declined to answer a reporter's additional questions such as how many countries the teams operate in and whether the Pentagon is expanding their presence globally, as the Times reported.

Mavica also declined to say when the program began.

Bryan Whitman, a senior Pentagon spokesman, said the program was started a couple of years ago but was not more specific. He said these liaisons are the only military personnel inside U.S. embassies who work for the regional military commander rather than for the ambassador.

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