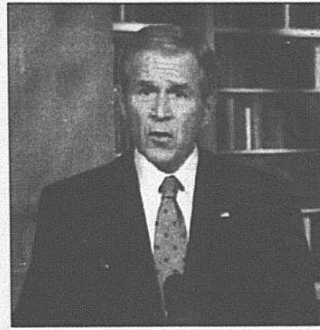


CHANGES IN IRAQ PRESIDENT BUSH'S NEW PLAN

Bush calls Iraqi chaos unacceptable



For first time acknowledges he had not previously sent ample forces

By MICHAEL ABRAMOWITZ and ROBIN WRIGHT
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — President Bush appealed directly to the American people Wednesday night to support a renewed campaign to pacify Iraq, saying it was necessary to add troops so the beleaguered Iraqi government can regain control of the streets of Baghdad and revive the process of political reconciliation and economic rebuilding.

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- ▶ Response from the Alabama delegation
- ▶ House Democrats to try to block troop funding
- ▶ Overview of Bush's plan

In a nationally televised address from the White House, Bush acknowledged for the first time that he had not sent enough troops to provide security in Iraq last year. Standing in the library of the White House, Bush described the situation in Iraq as "unacceptable" to the American people and to himself.

"Our troops in Iraq have fought bravely. They have done everything we have asked them to do," he said. "Where mistakes have been made, the responsibility rests with me."

Bush said he was ordering more than 20,000 soldiers and Marines to help the Iraqi government provide security in Baghdad and fight the Sunni insurgency in Anbar province. But he emphasized that Iraqi soldiers will take the lead in the

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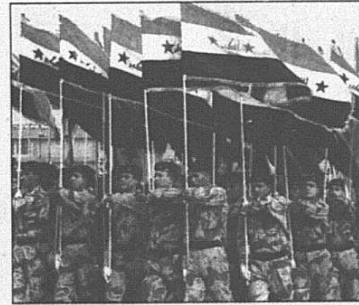
NEWSCOM/LOGAN MOCK-BUNTING

U.S. TROOP INCREASE | Bush will commit an additional 17,500 combat troops, or five brigades, with the first to arrive Monday. 4,000 Marines will be deployed to the troubled western province of Anbar. The supplemental budget asks for \$5.6 billion to pay for the new troops. Above: The 82nd Airborne in Fort Bragg, N.C., prepares to deploy to Iraq.



FILE

ECONOMIC AID | More than \$1 billion for three programs to create jobs and help reconstruction in neighborhoods, as they are secured by Iraqi and U.S. forces.



FILE

IRAQI COMMITMENTS | Iraq will allocate \$10 billion to aid in reconstruction and give U.S. and Iraqi troops authority to pursue extremists, regardless of sect.

Single 911 call center for Jefferson County in works

Plan aims to improve service, save money

By HANNAH WOLFSON
News staff writer

Jefferson County, Birmingham and cities are moving to consolidate the agency dispatching services into a single, possibly by year's end, organization.

The county, the cities and the City Fire District support the plan and are interested. It would relocate dispatch center Federal Reserve Building on Liberty at Liberty Park.

Participation is voluntary and commitments have been made, but the cities millions, said Mountain B Terry Oden, who is helping lead the effort. "It's going to happen," Oden said, "moving forward."

The aim is to improve service and efficiency, according to one Jefferson County official.

See 911

LEGISLATURE

Lawmakers hope for raise Riley says

By DAVID WHITE
News staff writer

MONTGOMERY — Some lawmakers steer a pay raise through the Legislature this week, but opposition by Gov. Bob Riley dimmed their chances, at least for now, lawmakers said Wednesday.

Several groups of lawmakers on Tuesday and again Wednesday if they support a raise for legislators, but Riley said. Jeff Emerson, Riley's spokesman yesterday and today with about 20 legislators who brought him the raise, and he told them he would vote for it, Riley said Wednesday. "He just didn't have a good idea."

Each of Alabama's 35 state senators

See PAY RAIS

INSIDE

18 arrested at Hoover

Eighteen people suspected of being illegal immigrants or of trafficking were arrested by federal, state and local law enforcement officers wearing bulletproof vests agents swept into the parking lot of Lowe's Home Improvement stores in Hoover as part of an investigation that began several months ago. 5

House passes minimum wage

The House voted to raise the minimum wage for the first time in 10 years. The wage would increase to \$7.25 over two years if the measure passes. Story | 5A



NEWS STAFF/TOM GORDON

Jerome Gray is retiring after 27 years as field director of the Alabama Democratic Education Conference. He played a major role in boosting the state's number of black elected officials to one of the highest in the country.

Voting rights powerhouse Gray lays aside 'quiet work'

By TOM GORDON
News staff writer

MONTGOMERY — When they were students at Conecuh County Training School, neither Joe Reed nor Jerome Gray foresaw a future in which they would team up to break barriers to black participation in Alabama politics. But when they saw a chance

for that future, they seized it with a vengeance. The evidence is in the numbers: Alabama has 870 black elected officials at all levels of government, more than in every other state except Mississippi. The numbers of blacks in Alabama's state and local governing bodies generally mirror the percentage of blacks in the state and local

populations.

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GRAY: Helped elect black officials

From Page 1A

primary players were Reed, as chairman of the black Alabama Democratic Conference, and Gray, as ADC field director. Now Gray, at 68, has decided that, after 27 years, his playing days are over. People who worked with him and against him are saying they may not see his like again.

"I don't think there's any one person who has had a bigger impact on the political landscape of Alabama than he has," said Birmingham lawyer Jim Blacksher, who, with advice from Gray, filed voting rights lawsuits that boosted the ranks of black elected officials.

"If you went down the list of people who have made big contributions to . . . (their) people, if you will, Jerome would be deserving of a heck of a lot more credit than he's ever gotten or ever will get," Montgomery lawyer David Boyd said.

Boyd should know. He met with Gray to negotiate electoral district plans that led to more blacks taking seats on city councils, school boards and county commissions across the state.

'Works his soul off'

A former biology teacher and one-time aspiring novelist who never ran for office, Gray became ADC field director — or as he calls it in his cell phone message, "cotton field director" — in 1977. He left to work in the Montgomery office of then-U.S. Sen. Donald Stewart in 1979, then returned to the ADC in 1981. Throughout his ADC years, his working motto has been, "Be like a termite: Work quietly, but effectively, from within."

The talk of quietly working does not disguise the passion that the slight, salt-and-peppergoatee-sporting Gray brought to his work. Reed, his longtime friend and ally, put it this way: "He works his soul off."

"My thing is, Nike says, 'Just do it,'" Gray, a Talladega College graduate, said in an interview recently. "I just feel, if you take the initiative and if you can

believe in what you can do and in what you can convince others to do in terms of good things, and if you can come up with a plan and follow through, you can achieve great things."

One of the most important initiatives was the case known as Dillard v. Crenshaw. The 1985 class-action lawsuit overturned at-large voting systems that limited the number of blacks on city councils, county commissions and elected school boards around the state. In all, 16 county commissions, 24 school boards and 141 city and town councils had to adopt new election methods, and most of them involved creating single-member districts.

Gray, Blacksher said, "was absolutely the engine behind the Dillard case." Then Gray and colleagues designed more than 100 of the local election systems the court order required, drawing district lines on paper maps and using calculators and felt-tip pens to highlight areas where black voters were concentrated.

Once the new plan was done, Gray took it to negotiations with local governing bodies or their attorneys, including Boyd.

"Between 1986 and 1988, it seems as though I was in federal court every week to testify at settlement fairness hearings," Gray said in a Justice Department speech marking the 40th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act.

"He might as well have been a lawyer," Boyd said. "He knew more law than most lawyers."

'The face of ADC'

But Boyd said redrawing election district lines was just a small part of Gray's job.

"He was . . . recruiting candidates, organizing grass-roots efforts and really being the face of the ADC out there with an awful lot of people all over the state," Boyd said. "I don't know how he kept up with everything."

"I was the warrior, I was the general," Reed said. "Jerome was oftentimes the guy who helped gather the information. He helped supply the fuel. You got to have facts and you've got to have information, and the man who has information often has power. We complemented each other."

Gray's information also led to a new districting plan and a

1983 special election that ended with the percentage of black legislators coming close to matching the black percentage of Alabama's population.

In the late 1970s, ADC's network successfully lobbied for the appointment of two black federal judges. Gray helped organize the lobbying effort during his two years working for Stewart. The judges, U.W. Clemon in Birmingham and Myron Thompson in Montgomery, are still on the bench. Thompson was the presiding judge in the Dillard case.

In 1986, Gray recruited two ADC members as plaintiffs in a suit charging that Attorney General Charlie Graddick's encouraging Republicans to vote in the Democratic runoff diluted black voting strength in the gubernatorial race. Graddick led in that runoff against Lt. Gov. Bill Baxley.

But a three-judge panel agreed with the lawsuit and told the Democratic Party to declare Baxley its nominee or hold a new election. The party declared Baxley the lawful nominee, but the resulting voter outcry led to the election of Republican Guy Hunt, Alabama's first GOP governor since Reconstruction.

Few black judges

Where the ADC and others have not succeeded is in substantially boosting the state's number of black judges. According to an ADC compilation, Alabama has about 263 state district, circuit and appellate judges. Only 18 are black, and none of them sit on an appellate court.

The general election defeat last year of appellate court candidates John England and Aubrey Ford, both black, reinforced Gray's belief in the need for electoral district systems, even for judges, and for the federal Voting Rights Act to protect them.

Should that act be allowed to expire? "Poppycock," Gray said. "It seems to me that every time we push for gaining access and equity, that people sometime think we are asking for and demanding too much. We're not trying to take away from anybody else. We're trying to gain access."

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