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THE NEWS

More change hinted to Iraq's draft

The U.S. ambassador raised the possibility Tuesday of further changes to Iraq's draft constitution, signaling that the Bush administration has not given up its campaign to push through a charter that will be broadly accepted. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad told reporters he believed "a final, final draft has not yet been, or the edits have not been, presented yet," a strong hint to Shiites and Kurds that Washington wants another bid to accommodate the Sunnis. Shiite leaders had no comment on Khalilzad's remarks.

SHEEHAN TO OPEN BUS TOUR

A woman who led an anti-war protest for nearly a month near President Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas, said Tuesday that she is glad Bush never showed up to discuss her son's death in Iraq, saying the president's absence "galvanized the peace movement." Cindy Sheehan's comments came as war protesters packed up their campsite near the ranch and prepared to leave Tuesday for a three-week bus tour.

67TH JOURNALIST KILLED

An Iraqi television journalist who was killed covering a demonstration east of Baghdad became the 67th journalist to die in the Iraq war, a media advocacy group said Tuesday. Rafed Mahmoud al-Rubai was shot by unidentified gunmen while covering a pro-Saddam Hussein rally on Saturday. Rubai, a freelance contributor to the Iraqi TV station Al Irakiya, died instantly, Reporters Without Borders said.

Bush: Keep terrorists out of Iraq

President says U.S. must protect oil fields

By Jennifer Loven
ASSOCIATED PRESS

CORONADO, Calif. — President Bush on Tuesday answered growing anti-war demonstrations with a fresh reason for American troops to continue fighting in Iraq: protection of the country's vast oil fields that he said would otherwise fall under the control of terrorist extremists.

The president, standing against a backdrop of the imposing USS Ronald Reagan, the newest aircraft carrier in the Navy's fleet, said terrorists would be denied their goal of making Iraq a base from which to recruit followers, train them and finance new attacks.

"We will defeat the terrorists," Bush said. "We will build

a free Iraq that will fight terrorists instead of giving them aid and sanctuary."

Appearing at the Naval Air Station North Island to commemorate the anniversary of the Allies' World War II victory over Japan, Bush compared his resolve now with President Franklin D. Roosevelt's in the 1940s and said America's mission in Iraq is to turn it into a democratic ally just as the U.S. did with Japan after its 1945 surrender.

But Democrats said Bush's leadership falls far short of Roosevelt's.

"Democratic Presidents Roosevelt and Truman led America to victory in World War II because they laid out a clear plan for success to the American people, America's

allies and America's troops," Democratic Party chairman Howard Dean said. "President Bush has failed to put together a plan, so despite the bravery and sacrifice of our troops, we are not making the progress that we should be in Iraq. The troops, our allies and the American people deserve better leadership from our commander in chief."

The speech was Bush's third in just over a week defending his Iraq policies, as the White House scrambles to counter growing public concern about the war. But the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf Coast drew attention away, as the White House announced during the president's remarks that he was cutting his August vaca-

tion short to return to Washington to personally oversee the federal response effort.

After the speech, Bush hurried back to Texas ahead of schedule to prepare to fly back to Washington today. He originally was to return to the White House on Friday.

Bush's August break has been marked by problems in Iraq.

It has been an especially deadly month there for U.S. troops, with the number of those who have died since the invasion of Iraq in March 2003 now nearing 1,900.

The growing death toll has become a regular feature of the slightly larger protests that Bush now encounters everywhere he goes, a movement that has been given new life by a vigil set up in a field down the road from the president's ranch by a mother grieving the



LENNY IGNELZI/ASSOCIATED PRESS

President Bush shakes hands with sailors after his speech commemorating VJ Day at the Naval Station North Island in Coronado, Calif.

loss of her soldier son in Iraq.

Cindy Sheehan arrived in Crawford, Texas, only days after Bush did, asking for a meeting so he could explain why her son and others are dying in Iraq. The White House refused, and Sheehan's camp

turned into a hub of activity for hundreds of activists around the country demanding that troops be brought home.

Nationwide, Bush's approval rating on his handling of Iraq has fallen below 40 percent.