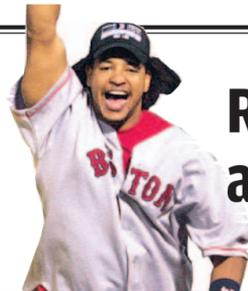




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The LEWISTON TRIBUNE

FIVE SECTIONS

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IRAQ

All signals point to a showdown

Goal of operation west of Baghdad would be to establish order before January election

By **ROBERT H. REID**
OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, Iraq — An uptick in airstrikes and other military moves point to an imminent showdown between U.S. forces and Sunni Muslim insurgents west of Baghdad — a decisive battle that could determine whether the campaign to bring democracy and stability to Iraq can succeed.

American officials have not confirmed a major assault is near against the insurgent bastions of Fallujah and neighboring Ramadi. But Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi has warned Fallujah leaders that force will be used if they do not hand over extremists, including terror mastermind Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

A similar escalation in U.S. military actions and Iraqi government warnings occurred before a major offensive in Najaf forced militiamen loyal to radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr to give up that holy city in late August. And U.S. and Iraqi troops retook Samarra from insurgents early this month.

Now U.S. airstrikes on purported al-Zarqawi positions in three neighborhoods of eastern and northern Fallujah, 40 miles west of Baghdad, have increased. And residents reported this week that Marines appeared to be reinforcing forward positions near key areas of the city. Other military units are on the move, including 800 British soldiers headed north to the U.S.-controlled zone.

The goal of an attack would be to restore government control in time for national elections by the end of January. However, an all-out assault on the scale of April's siege of Fallujah would carry enormous risk — both political and military — for the Americans and their Iraqi allies.

A series of policy mistakes by the U.S. military and the Bush administration have transformed Fallujah from a shabby, dusty backwater known regionally for mosques and tasty kebabs into a symbol of Arab pride and defiance of the United States throughout the Islamic world.

A videotape obtained Tuesday by Associated Press Television News featured a warning by masked gunmen that if Fallujah is subjected to an all-out assault, they will strike "with weapons and military tactics" that the Americans and their allies "have not experienced before."

Regardless of whether the threat was an empty boast, insurgents elsewhere in Iraq could be expected to step up attacks to try to relieve pressure on fighters in the Fallujah and Ramadi areas.

But the main problem an assault would pose for both the U.S. military and Allawi's government is political, such as a widespread public backlash. A nationwide asso-

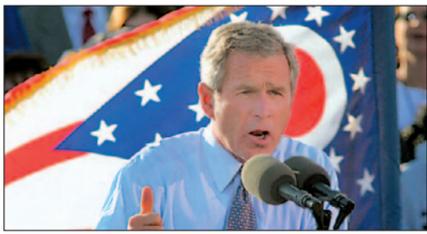
> See **SHOWDOWN**, Page 3A



Ayad Allawi



Abu Musab al-Zarqawi



Associated Press

TOP: President George Bush speaks to supporters at a campaign rally at The Hancock County Fairgrounds, in Findlay, Ohio. **BOT-TOM:** Democratic candidate Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., speaks at a rally at the U.S. Cellular Center in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

CAMPAIGN 2004

Bush appeals to Dems who lean right of left

President tries to lure crossover voters; Kerry says when it comes to Iraq, incumbent 'can't fix it'

By **DAVID ESPO** and **TOM RAUM**
OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LITITZ, Pa. — President Bush summoned support from Democrats whose "dreams and goals are not found in the far left wing" of their own party on Wednesday in a late-campaign appeal for crossover votes. Sen. John Kerry said that when it comes to Iraq, the man in the White House "doesn't get it, and he can't fix it." Bush has made a habit of "dodging and bob-

bing and weaving" when it comes to tons of missing explosives outside Baghdad, added the four-term Massachusetts senator, and Vice President Dick Cheney "is becoming the Chief Minister of Disinformation."

The president accused his rival of "wild charges" unbecoming a man with ambitions for the Oval Office.

Six days before the election, the president and his Democratic challenger appeared before large late-October crowds as their aides and outside groups made strategic adjustments for the campaign's endgame.

Bush's high command put extra money into television commercials in Portland, Maine — a

> See **APPEAL**, Page 5A



Tribune/Barry Kough

Washington Rep. George Nethercutt talks to supporters in Clarkston during a campaign swing through the southeastern part of the state during his quest for the U.S. Senate. With the Republican challenger Wednesday were his chief supporters — his wife Mary Beth and daughter Meredith, at right.

Shooting for a political eclipse

U.S. Senate challenger George Nethercutt pays a visit to Clarkston, portraying Murray as weak on defense and refuting charges he's too extreme to represent voters in Washington state

By **DEAN A. FERGUSON**
OF THE TRIBUNE

A shadow crept across the moon as a crowd of Clarkston Republicans watched and waited. A few joked about signs and omens. They hoped the lunar eclipse was a portent of a dark day Tuesday for Washington's Democratic U.S. Sen. Patty Murray.

When half the moon was half-washed in a reddish shadow, a bus stuffed with U.S. Rep. George Nethercutt and 40 of his supporters toolled in about an hour late for a

campaign rally.

"I want to be your senator," said Nethercutt to about 25 people gathered in Richard Eggleston's eye care office. "Sorry I kept you waiting."

The "Expect More Express" traveled Wednesday from Bellevue to Ellensburg, Yakima, Sunnyside, Kennewick, Walla Walla and Pomeroy before reaching Clarkston. The bus then moved on to Pullman and Spokane for the night.

Nethercutt, who described himself as a "recovering lawyer," criticized Murray for resisting tort reform.

He said Murray was weak on defense. Responding to Murray television ads calling Nethercutt "extreme," he said it was not extreme to cut taxes, balance the budget and support defense.

Heads nodded agreement as Nethercutt said, "I believe the President is doing the right thing" with his policies for dealing with terrorism.

Nethercutt told the crowd to disregard polls about his race.

An Oct. 20 poll conducted by

> See **ECLIPSE**, Page 5A

Accused murderers called to face grand jury

Seattle brothers will be extradited to testify in Idaho; prosecutor only confirms panel has been convened

By **DAVID JOHNSON**
OF THE TRIBUNE

MOSCOW — The two brothers accused of shooting to death University of Idaho football player Eric McMillan have been subpoena-

naed to appear before a grand jury in Moscow next week, Whitman County Prosecutor Denis Tracy confirmed Wednesday.

Matthew R. Wells II, 27, and James J. Wells, 25, of the Seattle area, remain behind bars in Col-

fax on charges of eluding police after the 19-year-old McMillan was shot once in the chest at his Moscow apartment.

The Latah County subpoenas represent the first confirmation the grand jury here is indeed digging into McMillan's death. The 16-member panel has been meeting in secret sessions at the Latah County Courthouse for almost a month.

First-degree murder arrest warrants have been issued in Latah County for both of the Wells brothers but not served pending extradition proceedings.

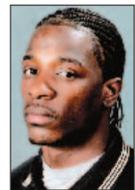
Latah County Prosecutor William Thompson Jr. confirmed Wednesday that the grand jury was convened but refused further comment about the proceedings.

Tracy said he will cooperate

fully with Latah County to have the Wells brothers transported to Moscow to go before the grand jury. But he said he expects the two will invoke their Fifth Amendment rights to remain silent.

About half a dozen or more college-age young people were seen sitting in the hallway outside a

> See **JURY**, Page 3A



Eric McMillan

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In Friday's Tribune

The Pullman Civic Theatre is closing its season with "Pride's Crossing," a play based on the life of the first woman to swim the English Channel. The details are in **Arts & Entertainment**.



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