



SUN

SERVICEMEMBERS REMEMBERED IN LOCAL CHURCH SERVICES

Faith: From Silverdale to Port Orchard to Bainbridge Island, churches offer prayers in the midst of war.

INSIDE ■ A2



MONDAY, MARCH 24, 2003 ■ 50 CENTS

THE NORTHWEST'S BEST COMMUNITY PAPER

'Tough day' for allies on road to Baghdad

16 Americans may be dead, five captured



AP photo by Jon Mills

A British Royal Marine fires a Milan wire-guided missile at an Iraqi position on the Al Faw peninsula in southern Iraq. Even as leading elements of the allied forces advanced closer to Baghdad, coalition soldiers ran into their fiercest resistance so far.

'Just the beginning ...': Bush warns of a tough fight but says allies are 'on course.' Troops press toward Baghdad face off with Republican Guard.

By Tony Perry
and Tracy Wilkinson
Los Angeles Times

WITH U.S. FORCES IN IRAQ — Iraqis took their first American prisoners Sunday and U.S. forces encountered the fiercest resistance yet as they pushed to within 100 miles of the doorstep to Baghdad.

Early Monday, as troops renewed their advance toward the Iraqi capital, they traded heavy artillery fire with the Republican Guard, apparently for the first time, while airstrikes struck the city for the fifth straight night. The Persian Gulf is 11 hours ahead of Washington state time.

In the most dispiriting U.S. setback, however, at least five Americans were seized and as many as 16 were killed in separate incidents. Some incidents were described by U.S. commanders as "ruses" that lured the Americans into captivity and death.

"Today was a tough day for the coalition," Army Lt. Gen. John Abizaid told reporters Sunday.

Meanwhile, U.S. and British troops pressed their march to engage head-

on with the Republican Guard in and around Baghdad, probably within days. U.S. forces for the first time bombarded Tikrit, north of Baghdad, the birthplace of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and one of his most significant bases of power.

Both at Nassiriya, in central Iraq, and at the southern port of Umm Qasr, fighting continued long after the Pentagon said both towns were in allied hands.

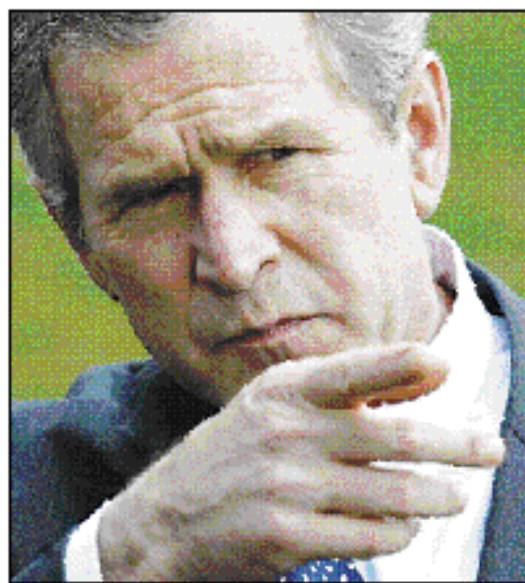
In Washington, President Bush cautioned that there might be no quick finish to the war against Iraq.

"This is just the beginning of a tough fight," he said. "It's going to take a while to achieve our objective. But we're on course, we're determined, and we're making good progress."

The worst allied reversal came with the ambush of a six-vehicle supply convoy near Nassiriya after the head driver apparently took a wrong turn.

A rescue team caught up to the errant convoy, beat back its attackers and extricated survivors. But 12 GIs were reported missing.

See WAR on A5



AP photo by Rick Bowmer

Ambushes, mistakes, fragging turn war messy

By Lisa Hoffman
Scripps Howard News Service

The first couple of days of the war with Iraq seemed to foretell a swift and smooth campaign, opening as it did with no sign of toxic weapons or even much resistance from Saddam Hussein's conventional army thousands of whom surrendered.

U.S. casualties amounted to less than a handful, and military officials predicted a quick fall of the southeast Iraqi cities of Basra and Umm Qasr, complete with cheering residents welcoming their liberators.

But on Saturday and Sunday, Persian Gulf War II turned messy.

In 24 hours, the first major fragging attack since the Vietnam war killed a U.S. officer and injured more than a dozen others, and the first major U.S. "friendly fire" mistake of the war downed a British warplane.

See 24 HOURS on A5

More war coverage inside:

■ **Iraqi 'ruses':** Iraqis are exploiting U.S. hopes that enemy troops will surrender. B1

■ **Protests:** U.S. soldiers discovered a facility being investigated as a possible chemical weapons factory. B1

■ **Suspect identified:** Asan Akber, suspected of 'fragging' fellow 101st Airborne soldiers, reportedly made anti-American statements to investigators. B2

■ **Analysis:** War could be longer and more expensive than previously thought. B3

WEATHER

Partly sunny, rain developing late.
Highs: 52 to 54
Lows: 43 to 45
See weather on Page A6



INSIDE

Unsung HeroA3
ObituariesA4
OpinionA6
Abby/horoscope/lottery.....A8
Oscars: Chicago wins big.....A8
Nation & World.....B1

Sports/NCAA Sweet Sixteen set.....C1
TheatersC2
TV/puzzlesC6
Health/Soy milk in mainstream.....C8
ComicsC7
Employment/Classifieds.....D1

NO MINI PAGE

Because of war coverage, the Mini Page will not be published today.

CORRECTION

WRONG WEB ADDRESS: The Department of Defense Web site where you can send a letter of thanks to service members can be found at www.defendamerica.gov. Sunday's editorial gave an incorrect address.

