

## Bodies of fetus, woman found by bay

Cops investigating Laci Peterson case summoned to site

By Janine DeFao, Meredith May and Henry K. Lee  
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITERS

Modesto police investigating the disappearance of Laci Peterson were summoned to the East Bay on Monday after the badly decomposed body of a woman washed ashore in Richmond a day after the discovery of a male fetus a mile away.

Authorities began an autopsy Monday night but were unable to immediately determine whether the woman's body is that of the 27-year-old pregnant Modesto woman, who was reported missing by her husband on Christmas Eve. Scott Peterson, a 30-year-old fertilizer salesman, has told police that he last saw Laci when he left for the Berkeley Marina for a day fishing trip.

"There's still a lot of unknowns here," Contra Costa sheriff and coroner's spokesman Jimmy Lee said Monday night when the coroner's office closed for the day after conducting autopsies on both bodies. Without explaining, Lee said it most likely would take several days to identify the bodies.

The deteriorating body of the fetus was discovered at 4 p.m. Sunday by a dog walker on the Richmond shoreline. At 11:45 a.m. Monday, another dog walker found a decomposed body on the rocky shore of the Point Isabel Regional Shoreline, a popular park in Richmond for walking dogs. The bodies were discovered about a mile apart at opposite ends of an inlet along the Richmond shoreline.

East Bay Regional Park District Police Chief Norman Lapera said it was apparent that the woman's body had been in the water for some time.

An autopsy on the fetus Monday revealed that it was a boy at full term or near full term. The coroner did not determine the cause of death, and the body was too decomposed to determine the fetus' race or to tell how long it had been in the water, authorities said.

Authorities revealed little after the autopsy on the woman later in the day. A police source told The Chronicle that the woman was wearing a nursing bra, a fuller-fit-

► **BODIES:** Page A7 Col. 1

# U.S. in mop-up mode

Fall of Tikrit leaves troops to battle smaller groups of holdouts



DAVID GUTTENBERGER / Associated Press

U.S. soldiers arrest men who locals said were non-Iraqi Arab fighters in Baghdad. They were accused of driving a vehicle with weapons and trying to ambush U.S. troops.



J. SCOTT APPLIN/WHITE HOUSE

National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice has become President Bush's closest aide.

## SECURITY ADVISER: Rice is a quiet power in White House

By Carolyn Lochhead  
CHRONICLE WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON — One recent afternoon, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice was wrapping up a news briefing on the perilous contours of postwar Iraq as if it were child's play.

One more question, she said, relaxed and firmly in control of the room full of reporters. "I've got to catch the helicopter."

As she stepped outside, the loud engines of Marine One started up on the White House

lawn, where President Bush was waiting to leave for Camp David. Not that the helicopter would have lifted off without Rice. In a time of war, in a Cabinet filled with powerful men, in a town where presidential "face-time" is the gold-standard currency, Bush has made Rice his closest, most trusted adviser.

Rice — a former Stanford University provost and avid football fan who keeps an Oakland Raiders football helmet in her office — is arguably the

► **RICE:** Page A11 Col. 1

## WAR IN IRAQ

**Seeking normalcy:** Several hundred Iraqi police officers reported to work in Baghdad, and U.S. soldiers began cracking down on looters. Page A8

**End of an era:** As thousands of Marines poured into Saddam Hussein's hometown, the last and most formidable of the Iraqi leader's palaces suffered an ignominious fate. Page A9

**Syria showdown?** Claiming that Syria is harboring fleeing members of Saddam Hussein's government, the Bush administration is floating the idea of economic sanctions against that nation. Page A10

**In Bay Area:** In California's small towns, the war in Iraq has become just a topic of casual conversation. Page A13

**In Business:** The Army will seek new bidders to rebuild Iraq's oil infrastructure, so Halliburton Co. will have to compete for the job. Page B1

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## FEWER TARGETS: Air missions cut, some ships heading home

By Mark Abel  
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

U.S. forces overwhelmed the last defenders of Saddam Hussein's hometown Monday, and Pentagon officials declared that no more large-scale battles lay ahead in a war winding down much faster than expected.

"The major combat operations are over, because the major Iraqi (fighting) units on the ground cease to show coherence," Maj. Gen. Stanley McChrystal, vice director of the Pentagon's Joint Staff, said after it became clear

that Tikrit — the town that Hussein had turned into a monument to himself — had fallen overnight.

Faced with vivid demonstrations of lethal American firepower, Iraqi Republican Guard soldiers by the hundreds decided that discretion was the better part of valor. They either pulled out of Tikrit under cover of darkness or simply shed their uniforms and melted away into the city of 250,000 people.

After allied warplanes pounded the area for days, U.S. ground forces were able to seize a key

► **IRAQ:** Page A10 Col. 1

## KEEPING ORDER: Baghdad's thugs no match for Marines

By John Koopman  
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

BAGHDAD — It doesn't take much to find action in this city. Usually, it comes looking for you.

Marine 2nd Lt. Milan Langella is leading a patrol through what used to be a financial center of the city. An Iraqi man and his young son approach. The man is wearing a brown plaid shirt with blood soaking the sleeve. With the help of an interpreter, he tells the lieutenant that he's been shot, and the shooter is a couple of blocks away. Langella opens the man's

sleeve and looks at the bullet hole, still oozing blood. He calls the squad to move out. The dozen Marines trot down an alley, M-16s pointed toward windows and doors, canteens and ammo pouches swaying and sweat dripping from beneath their helmets.

"He might be leading us into an ambush," Langella tells his radio operator. "If we don't find anything in a couple of blocks, we'll cut it off."

They twist and turn through the streets and come to a spot on the banks of the Tigris River

► **MARINES:** Page A8 Col. 1

## Two-thirds of state voters dislike governor, pollsters find

Recall could spell trouble for Davis

By John Wildermuth  
CHRONICLE POLITICAL WRITER

Gov. Gray Davis' popularity has plummeted to a record low among California voters, showing that he would be in serious trouble if the effort to recall him gets on the ballot, according to a new Field Poll.



**Gray Davis'** numbers "are as bad as we've seen since we've been polling," a pollster says.

More than two-thirds of California voters now have an unfavorable opinion of Davis, with only 27 percent pleased with him. Even 54 percent of the state's

Democrats now dislike Davis. If backers of the effort to recall him can collect the almost 900,000 valid signatures needed to force a vote, the poll shows the governor has serious problems. Throughout the state, 46 percent of those surveyed would vote to dump Davis, with 43 percent willing to keep him in office.

"If the recall gets on the ballot, all bets are off," said Mark DiCamillo, director of the Field Poll. "Voters then don't have to

sign their name (to a recall petition). They just can voice their disapproval on the ballot."

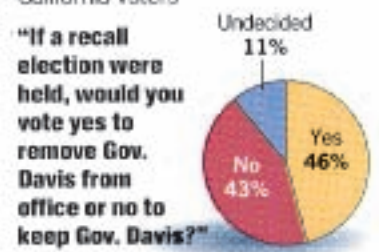
Davis' job performance rating also took a beating in the new poll. Sixty-five percent of those surveyed are unhappy with the job the governor is doing, up from 49 percent in September. Only 24 percent of all California voters, and 36 percent of the Democrats, believe Davis is doing a good job.

"The numbers are as bad as

► **POLL:** Page A12 Col. 1

### Field Poll Gov. Davis

Results from a survey of 695 California voters



Source: Field Poll Chronicle Graphic

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