

PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW



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MONDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2005

Pittsburgh Edition 50¢
Five sections ¥ 52 pages

Bush: We are winning the war

President says critics falling prey to defeatism

Opponents say he has yet to set benchmarks to show the U.S. is making progress in Iraq.

BY WILLIAM DOUGLAS AND JAMES KUHNHENN
KNIGHT RIDDER NEWSPAPERS

WASHINGTON — President Bush on Sunday declared that America is winning the war in Iraq but warned that it's premature to withdraw U.S. troops.

Speaking from the Oval Office — where he launched the war nearly three years ago —

Bush took on critics of the war who argue for a U.S. pullout.

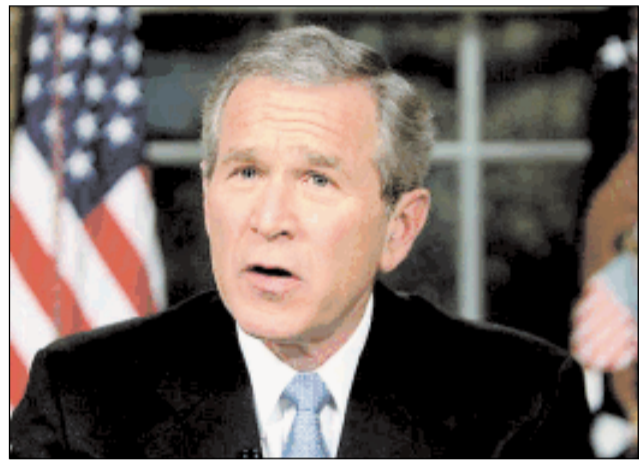
"Defeatism may have its partisan uses, but it is not justified by the facts," the president said. "For every scene of destruction in Iraq, there are more scenes of rebuilding and hope. For every life lost, there are countless more lives reclaimed. And for every terrorist working to stop freedom in Iraq, there are many more Iraqis and Americans working to defeat them."

Looking straight into the camera and pointing a finger forward, Bush declared: "Not only

SEE BUSH ¥A8

Surprise visit

Vice President Cheney makes his first trip to Iraq in more than a decade. As the vice president met with U.S. and Iraqi soldiers and Iraqi leaders, insurgents killed more than 30 people in a string of attacks across the country. **A8**



MANUEL BALCE CENETA/AP

President Bush, in a nationally televised speech Sunday, declared that Iraq's elections signal the birth of democracy in the Middle East, arguing against a U.S. troop pullout while acknowledging the doubts of some that the war is lost and not worth another dime or another day.

Sharon critical to peace hopes

The Israeli leader could be sidelined for some time after a mild stroke.

ANALYSIS

BY MARK LAVIE
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM — The mild stroke suffered by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on Sunday abruptly raised the question of what would happen to Mideast peace prospects if the 77-year-old leader is incapacitated.

Sharon's condition quickly improved, and his doctor said he was expected to be released from the hospital after a few days. Sharon aides said he was lucid and in control of the government.



Sharon

The prime minister never lost consciousness and was talking and joking with his family hours after arriving at Jerusalem's Hadassah Hospital, doctors said. He was treated with blood thinners and suffered no damage from the stroke, said his personal physician, Boleslaw Goldman.

"He's lucid, he's fully functional," Sharon aide Raanan Gissin said.

Sharon's transformation in recent times from hawk to pragmatist — becoming the first Israeli leader to relinquish land the Palestinians claim for a future state — has led many Israelis to view him as their best chance for peace.

Just four weeks ago, Sharon set off a political earthquake by leaving the hard-line Likud

SEE SHARON ¥A8

The safety dance



CHAZ PALLA/TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Steelers Joey Porter (front) and Clark Haggans react Sunday after stopping the Vikings Michael Bennett in the end zone for a fourth quarter safety at the Metrodome. The Steelers won, 18-3. **Coverage, C10-15.**

TSA top local managers are paid top dollar

Their counterparts in private industry earn, on average, nearly \$20,000 less.

BY JIM RITCHIE
TRIBUNE-REVIEW

The top Transportation Security Administration managers at Pittsburgh International Airport earn far more than their counterparts in private industry, and critics say the government salaries are excessive.

The top 10 TSA managers based at the Findlay airport earn an average of nearly \$20,000 more than Pittsburgh-area workers in similar positions at private companies, according to a Pittsburgh Tribune-Review analysis of TSA salaries with U.S. Department of Labor data. One employee, Dale Palmer, a training manager, is paid \$48,000 more than the local average for training managers in private industry.

U.S. Rep. John Mica, R-Fla., called for an investigation of the TSA earlier this year because of the high salaries it pays to managers. Mica argues that the agency has too many managers and pays them far more than it should.

"The TSA's middle management has grown into a full-fledged bureaucracy, well beyond anything we intended or envisioned," said Gary Burns, a Mica spokesman.

President Bush approved

forming the federal agency in 2002 after the 9/11 terrorist attacks to help protect airline travelers. The agency employs 45,000 screeners and supervisors nationwide — about 350 at Pittsburgh International. Airline passengers pay an extra \$2.50 per trip to help pay for security costs.

The agency has been the target of frequent criticism regarding security breaches, felons hired as screeners and mismanagement.

Last week, House Homeland Security Subcommittee Chairman Dan Lungren, R-Calif., proposed legislation that would restructure the TSA to improve its performance.

"More than four years after the attacks on 9/11, TSA has received extremely poor grades in several areas of aviation security, including passenger pre-screening, explosives detection and air cargo screening," Lungren said. "We are taking the steps necessary to enhance aviation security across the country, while reducing the frustrations of legitimate airline passengers and eliminating wasteful government spending."

Locally, an internal investigation of alleged employee abuse and intimidation at Pittsburgh International Airport culminated in the forced resignations of the TSA's three lead managers.

"They're paid an enormous amount of money to do a very bad job," said Mike Boyd, an

SEE TSA ¥A4

Nordstrom once again being talked about Downtown

Developers push the benefits of locating in the city instead of the suburbs.

BY MICHAEL YEOMANS AND RON DAPARMA
TRIBUNE-REVIEW

A Nordstrom department store belongs Downtown instead of in a suburban mall, said a developer involved in the effort to rebuild Pittsburgh's city core.

"If I'm Nordstrom, I'd want to draw from the widest possible area. If (Nordstrom) were Downtown, it could pull from the North Hills, South Hills and the Monroeville area," said Lucas Piatt, real estate director of Millcraft Industries Inc.

PNC Financial Services Group Inc. Chairman and CEO James E. Rohr and Gov. Ed Rendell are expected to announce at a news conference this morning details of a \$170 million office/condominium/hotel project on properties PNC owns on the north side of Fifth Avenue adjacent

to its headquarters building.

Washington County-based Millcraft last week said it will spend up to \$50 million turning the closed Lazarus building Downtown into a condominium complex named Piatt Place with a mix of retail and office space on the first three floors.

Seattle-based Nordstrom, an upscale department store chain known for excellent customer service and top-notch

SEE NORDSTROM ¥A4

MORNING BRIEFING

Weather



Partly cloudy and colder today with flurries. Partly cloudy and brisk tonight. **A12**

Nation/World

■ Eight years after Cuba restored Dec. 25 as a national holiday in a gesture to Pope John Paul II, there is not much Christmas spirit to show for it. **A2**

■ Bolivian Indian activist Evo Morales, who describes himself as the United States worst nightmare, wins election as president of South America's poorest nation. **A3**

Opinion

■ A homicide is not prosecuted after three years. Dimitri Vassilaros explores the issue. **A11**

City & Region

■ Military veterans who make up a unit conducting military honor ceremonies at funerals say it's a labor of love they often have to pay for themselves. **B1**

Sports

■ The Chargers end the Colts hopes of an undefeated season with a 26-17 victory in Indianapolis. **C16**



■ The richest man in the world, **Bill Gates**, and his wife, **Melinda**, were named Time magazine's Persons of the Year along with Irish rocker **Bono** for being Good Samaritans who made a difference in different ways. The three were chosen for their work in trying to find ways to eradicate such calamities as malaria in Africa, HIV and AIDS and the poverty that kills 8 million people a year, said James Kelly, Time managing editor.

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