

## Powell: NATO risks breakup over Iraq rift

WASHINGTON (AP) - Addressing a historic rift within NATO Secretary of State Colin Powell said Tuesday the future of the 53-year-old military alliance is at risk if it fails to confront the crisis with Iraq.

Distressed by the refusal of three U.S. allies to agree to bolster Turkey's defenses, Powell told the Senate Budget Committee that it is not the United States that is fracturing NATO by seeking support for the option of war to disarm Iraq.

"The alliance is breaking itself up because it will not meet its responsibilities," Powell said in response to a suggestion by Sen. Ernest Hollings, D-S.C., that the Bush administration was

"barreling in" to get Iraqi President Saddam Hussein over the objections of allies, Russia and China.

Reflecting widespread skepticism among members of Congress, Hollings said Iraq "is not an immediate threat" and advised Powell "to be a little bit more deliberate" in dealing with other nations about Iraq.

Powell rebutted that "this is the time to deal with this regime, once and for all," as he said it strengthens its ties to al-Qaida and other terror groups.

He told the committee that what appeared to be a new statement from al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden shows why the world needs to be wary of Iraqi ties to

terrorists.

Powell said he had read a transcript of "what bin Laden — or who we believe to be bin Laden" was saying on the al-Jazeera Arab satellite station Tuesday. "Once again he speaks to the people of Iraq and talks about their struggle and how he is in partnership with Iraq," Powell said.

As broadcast later, the voice purporting to be bin Laden's urged Iraqis to confront any U.S.-led invasion with camouflaged trenches and suicide bombings.

"With all the might of the enemy, they were unable to defeat us" in Afghanistan, the speaker said. "We hope that our brothers in Iraq will do the same as we did."

Al-Qaida and Iraq, the speaker indicated, are bound by a common hatred of the United States.

On another front, President Bush's national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, met in New York with chief U.N. weapons inspector Hans Blix. They discussed the inspection process, a senior U.S. official said.

Blix and atomic weapons inspector Mohamed ElBaradei are to report to the Security Council on Friday on their search for weapons of mass destruction.

Powell, in his testimony to the Senate committee, said, "This nexus between terrorists and states that are developing weapons of mass de-

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## Trial set in 'racist rhyme' lawsuit

KANSAS CITY, Kan. (AP) - A judge has set a trial date in a discrimination lawsuit filed against Southwest Airlines by two black passengers who were upset when a flight attendant recited a version of a rhyme with a racist history.

Grace Fuller, 48, and her sister Louis Sawyer, 46, were returning from Las Vegas two years ago when flight attendant Jennifer Cundiff, trying to get passengers to sit down, said over the intercom, "Eenie, meenie, minie, moe; pick a seat, we gotta go."

The sisters say the rhyme was directed at them and was a reference to its racist version that dates to before the civil rights era: "Eenie, meenie, minie, moe; catch a n— by his toe."

"It was like I was too dumb to find a seat," Fuller said. Sawyer said fellow passengers snickered at the rhyme, which made her feel alienated.

The sisters are seeking unspecified compensatory and punitive damages. U.S. District Judge Kathryn Vratil last week dismissed the sisters' claims of physical and emotional distress but set trial for March 4.

"The court agrees with plaintiffs that because of its history, the phrase 'eenie, meenie, minie, moe' could reasonably be viewed as objectively racist and offensive," Vratil wrote. The second line of a modern version of the rhyme usually goes, "Catch a tiger by the toe."

Airline attorney John Cowden said there was no intent to discriminate against any passenger.

Cundiff, who is white and was 22 at the time of the incident, said she had never heard the offensive version of the rhyme. She said she learned the Southwest version from co-workers and used it as a funny way of getting passengers - who are not assigned seats on Southwest - to sit down.

Plaintiffs' attorney Scott Wissel said the sisters also want Southwest to stop using the rhyme and provide employee training to prevent such incidents.

## Georgia redistricting shows political division

ATLANTA (AP) - Georgia's first Republican governor since Reconstruction declared the Democratic attorney general's refusal to obey his directive to drop a redistricting lawsuit puts Georgia on the road to a constitutional crisis.

If Gov. Sonny Perdue wins the struggle, it could leave Thurbert Baker, the state's first black Attorney General, nearly powerless and would mean the governor calls the legal shots for Georgia.

In a state dominated by Democrats for more than a century, this type of public warfare is rare, but not unprecedented. Still, there is no clear indicator that shows who is in charge when the attorney general and governor disagree on a legal matter.

"If the attorney general, based off partisan political pressure, wants to pursue a constitutional crisis, I am willing to go there," Perdue, who took office last month, told reporters Thursday, a day after announcing he hired

former U.S. Attorney General Griffin Bell for the showdown.

Russ Willard, a spokesman for Baker, said the Democrat wasn't backing down because "there are valid and pressing legal reasons for going forward."

This fight is over redistricting, an important topic to Republicans who two years ago watched a Democrat-dominated Legislature draw new lines designed to prevent Republicans from gaining more seats despite population growth in GOP-dominated areas. If the state wins an appeal the Supreme Court already has agreed to hear, it would revert to a state Senate redistricting map even more heavily tilted toward Democrats than the one now in effect.

Republicans want to draw a new map that would cement their current majority in the Senate. Democrats, who control the House, don't want that to happen.

In his State of the State address last month, Perdue

asked Baker to abandon the appeal. Baker declined Wednesday, announcing he planned to pursue it because it could lead to a new ruling from the nation's highest court clarifying complex redistricting issues.

Past brushes between governors and attorneys general have done little to clarify who's in charge.

In a 1989 skirmish between Gov. Joe Frank Harris and Attorney General Mike Bowers - both Democrats although Bowers later changed parties - the Georgia Supreme Court left the question unanswered.

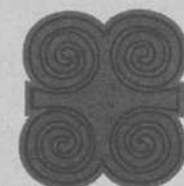
Bowers sued the Board of Regents when it refused to follow his opinion that the names of candidates under consideration for college presidencies were subject to disclosure under the Open Records Act.

It was an unusual circumstance because, as the state's chief legal officer, the attorney general usually represents such boards in lawsuits rather than initiating suits

against them.

Harris authorized the board to hire a private lawyer to defend itself.

The court ruled that the board should have complied with the Open Records Act but left unresolved another question raised during litigation - whether the attorney general needed the governor's approval to sue state agencies.



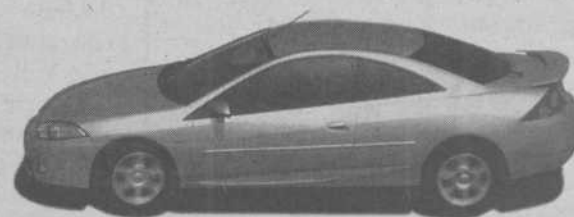
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## Las Vegas caregiver passes at 38



Native Las Vegas caregiver Carmen Elizabeth Armstrong passed away last Wednesday after recurring medical complications. The 38-year old Armstrong was the eldest daughter of Marilyn Elizabeth Armstrong and long-time community philanthropist Sammie Ross Armstrong. A former employee of her fathers defunct company, Ray & Ross Transport, Carmen was remembered by many of her co-workers. Victor Ingram, a former manager recalls her smile and kindness that set the tone for a pleasant workday.

Her son Teh Dijon Armstrong, her parents, sister Dusti Nicole Armstrong and nephew Kobe Ross Armstrong-Smith survive Carmen. Funeral services will commence today at Zion United Methodist Church, 2108 North Revere Street beginning at 1 p.m.