

# Rice likens Iraq to civil rights fight

DALLAS (AP) - National security adviser Condoleezza Rice likened Iraq's halting steps toward self-government to black Americans' struggle for civil rights, imploring black journalists Thursday to reject arguments that some people are incapable of democracy.

"We've heard that argument before, and we, more than any, as a people, should be ready to reject it," Rice, who is black, told about 1,200 people at the National Association of Black Journalists convention.

"The view was wrong in 1963 in Birmingham, and it is wrong in 2003 in Baghdad and in the rest of the Middle East," she said.

"We should not let our voice waver in speaking out (See Rice, Page 12)



*"We must never, ever indulge in the condescending voices who allege that some people in Africa or in the Middle East are just not interested in freedom, they're culturally just not ready for freedom or they just aren't ready for freedom's responsibilities."*

—Condoleezza Rice

# 135 candidates make Calif. recall election

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) - Voters will have 135 candidates to choose from to replace Gov. Gray Davis in California's historic recall election, the secretary of state's office said Wednesday after certifying the ballot.

More than 110 of the 247 would-be governors who had submitted papers to run in the Oct. 7 special election were disqualified because of incomplete paperwork, state officials said.

The number of candidates likely surpasses any previous number of gubernatorial candidates in one election, said Bruce Cain, a political science professor at the University of California, Berkeley.

"There's nothing comes close," Cain said.

As the ballot became offi-

cial, elections supervisors throughout California worried about how they would pay for it all. Estimates on the cost of the recall started at \$30 million, increased to as much as \$67 million and elections officials throughout the state said it could go higher because of the number of candidates.

Potential costs to California's 58 counties range from \$50,000 in rural Plumas County to \$13 million in Los Angeles County.

Clerk Stephen Weir said Contra Costa is facing election costs that may pass \$2 million.

"That's a lot of immunization shots or meals or services to people," Weir said.

Deficit-strapped counties are tapping emergency reserves, using money budgeted for the March primary

and hoping the state makes good on its previous history of paying for special elections. The higher election costs are hitting counties during a budget crisis that has led to hundreds of millions of dollars in cuts.

Meanwhile, records show Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger didn't vote in five of the past 11 state elections. His campaign aides said they are researching the four 1996 and 2000 absentee ballots Schwarzenegger requested.

They blamed an assistant who may have forgotten to mail them, or said sometimes ballots are rejected or not recorded by elections officials.

With 55 days until the election, some of the expected front runners were plotting strategy, making appearances and taking shots at the com-

petition. Political commentator Arianna Huffington said she will campaign with Green Party candidate Peter Camejo to push a progressive agenda. Both candidates said they will consider stepping down if the other pulls ahead in polls.

# DA wants fast retrial of Inglewood cop

By Gene C. Johnson Jr.  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (NNPA)—If the district attorney's office expects to convict ex-Inglewood police Officer Jeremy Morse of using excessive force during the arrest of teenager Donovan Jackson last year, people who followed the first trial say District Attorney Steve Cooley must employ a new team of prosecutors and a new strategy.

Cooley recently announced that he would retry Morse, the day after a mistrial was declared in the first trial because of a hung jury. Morse's former partner Bijan Darvish was acquitted of charges he filed a false police report.

"We will retry the case and will ask Judge [William R.] Hollingsworth to set the retrial within the statutory 60-day period," said Cooley in a prepared statement. "There is no reason to wait. The evidence is there. The

witnesses are ready."

Originally, in allowing prosecutors time to decide if they want to retry Morse and begin pretrial matters, the court set a Sept. 22 deadline. Cooley is now pushing for that date to be moved up to Aug. 15.

"This was the legal and morally correct decision by Steve Cooley" said Earl Ofari Hutchinson, president of the National Alliance for Positive Action. "It sends the strong message that police abuse will not be tolerated."

A legal observer from Hutchinson's organization, he said, will be present at the retrial to "review press statements by the defense attorneys and respond, challenge prosecutors to work harder to get a racially diverse jury, press them to get their best use of force witness...vigorously challenge the testimony of the defense witnesses."

(See Retrial, Page 13)

# Rap industry probe suspect takes deal

NEW YORK (AP) - A rap industry insider has quietly cut a plea deal with authorities investigating alleged ties between a music label and the city's violent drug trade.

Court papers show that Jon Ragin — a convicted drug dealer who co-produced a recent film marketed by Murder Inc. records — pleaded guilty to federal conspiracy charges. Another man arrested with Ragin earlier this year, Derek Hayes, has also agreed to a plea bargain with prosecutors in Brooklyn.

Prosecutors have described Ragin as a close associate of Kenneth "Supreme" McGriff, a convicted drug kingpin suspected of secretly bankrolling Murder Inc., home to multiplatinum artists Ashanti and Ja Rule.

Murder Inc. is a 50-50 joint venture between McGriff's longtime friend, Irv Gotti, and Island-Def Jam Records, a division of Universal Music Group, which is owned by Vivendi, according to documents filed in an unrelated case.

Neither McGriff, Gotti nor any of Vivendi's companies have been charged in the ongoing investigation. McGriff and Gotti deny any wrongdoing.

Calls Monday to Ragin's attorneys were not immediately returned; a lawyer for Hayes declined comment. Prosecutors refused to discuss the case.

Ragin and Hayes were arrested during January raids at various New York locations, including the Murder Inc. offices and a sham tuxedo rental business linked to a 1999 murder. The men were accused of using the tuxedo shop as a front for laundering proceeds from stolen credit cards.

Bank records revealed that more than \$500,000 went through the tuxedo shop's account between 1998 and 2001, despite "the lack of legitimate business," court records said. Agents found more than 1,000 credit cards (See Deal, Page 4)

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