

# HUD chief: Democrats treat Blacks as victims

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Rev. Jesse Jackson and other Black political leaders spread a message of victimization that leads most Blacks to vote Democratic, Housing and Urban Development Secretary Alphonso Jackson charged Wednesday.

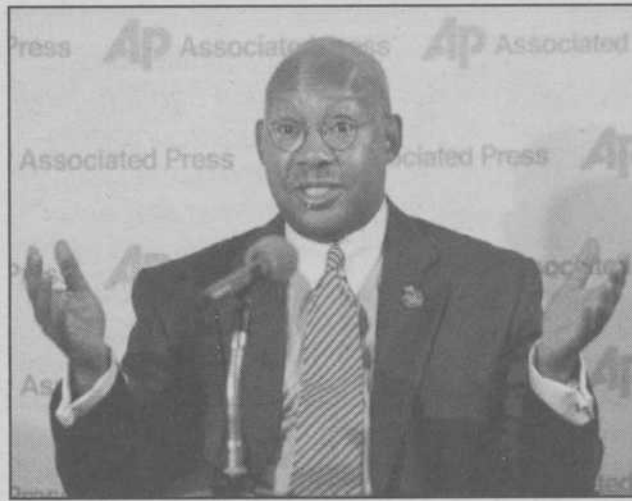
The HUD secretary said he has advised President Bush's campaign to focus its efforts on younger Blacks who did not grow up during the civil rights era because older Blacks who did "have been conditioned" to vote Democratic by Jesse Jack-

son, NAACP Chairman Julian Bond, NAACP President Kweisi Mfume and others.

"They have made a living telling Black people they are victims," the HUD secretary said in an interview with The Associated Press.

"As long as they keep them in victim mode, they have liberals who will take care of them."

Last week Jesse Jackson joined the John Kerry campaign as a senior adviser for the Democratic presidential candidate.



Alphonso Jackson, U.S. secretary for Housing and Urban Development, says Democrats take Blacks for granted.

The move comes amid recent polling showing Kerry's support slipping among Blacks. The Kerry campaign said Jesse Jackson will travel to battleground states to energize Democratic support for Kerry and running mate John Edwards.

A Pew Research Center poll released Tuesday showed 73 percent of Blacks supporting Kerry, down from 83 percent in August. Bush's support among Blacks was at 12 percent, up from 6 percent.

The HUD secretary, who said he has been consulting

with Bush strategist Karl Rove and other campaign officials, said Republicans are targeting Blacks who are under 40 with a message that Bush's economic policies are better for them.

"You can't rise as a class. You have to rise individually. It's what many of the civil rights-era people don't understand," he said.

"They want us to rise together, they keep telling us that we are victims. If they keep telling us we are victims, then there is a role for them to play."

# Rice defends comments about Iraq's nuclear threat

WASHINGTON (AP) - National security adviser Condoleezza Rice on Sunday defended her characterization of Saddam Hussein's nuclear capabilities in the months before the Iraq invasion, even as a published report said government experts had cast doubt at the time.

In the run-up to the March 2003 war, Rice said in a television interview in 2002 that the Iraqi president was trying to obtain high-strength aluminum tubes to rebuild his nuclear weapons program. The tubes, she said, were "only really suited for nuclear weapons programs."

On Sunday, Rice acknowledged she was aware of a debate within the U.S. intelligence community about whether the tubes were intended for nuclear weapons.

"I knew that there was a dispute. I actually didn't really know the nature of the dispute," Rice told ABC's "This Week."

"The intelligence community assessment as a whole was that these [tubes] were likely and certainly suitable for, and likely for, his nuclear weapons program," Rice said. She said the director of the CIA at the time, George Tenet, believed that the tubes were for centrifuge parts.

"When you are faced with an assessment that Saddam Hussein is reconstituting his nuclear weapons program, that he has by the end of the decade the probability of having a nuclear weapon ... the tendency is always not to want to underestimate these programs," Rice said.

But two years later, Rice

insisted she has no regrets about how the administration portrayed what it believed was a dangerous threat posed by Saddam.

"I stand by to this day the correctness of the decision to take seriously an intelligence assessment that Saddam Hussein would likely have a nuclear weapon by the end of the decade" if action wasn't taken.

"We were all unhappy that the intelligence was not as good as we had thought that it was. But the essential judgment was absolutely right. Saddam Hussein was a threat," she said.

Later, in an interview on CNN's "Late Edition," Rice said, "If you underestimate the nuclear threat of a tyrant, you make a really big mistake."

A New York Times story Sunday quoted four CIA officials and a senior administration official as saying that Rice's staff had been told in 2001 that Energy Department experts believed the tubes were probably intended for small artillery rockets — and not nuclear weapons.

Rice said she learned of objections by the Energy Department only after making her 2002 comments.

During the CNN interview in 2002, Rice said the tubes were "only really suited for

nuclear weapons programs." In bolstering the administration's argument of the threat the nation faced, she said, "We don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud."

Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry seized on the latest debate over flawed prewar intelligence as more evidence that the Bush administration misled the country into invading Iraq.

"These are questions the president must face, these are the questions that a president

has to answer fully to the American people and to the troops," Kerry told a town hall meeting in Ohio on Sunday.

Kerry foreign policy adviser and former U.N. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke told "This Week," "What the Times article is saying is that the top nuclear experts in the country said those aluminum tubes were not for nuclear weapons, and that this was suppressed by the administration, particularly Vice President Cheney."

# Republicans seeking vote to end military draft speculation

WASHINGTON (AFP) - US lawmakers in the House of Representatives overwhelmingly rejected a proposal to require compulsory military service, a vote that Republicans hope will squash speculation about a return to the draft amid US struggles in Iraq.

The measure, which sought to require Americans aged 18-26 to perform two years of national service, was defeated with only two votes in favor and 396 against.

President George W. Bush hailed the vote, saying: "If this bill were presented to me, I would veto it."

"America's all-volunteer military is the best in the world, and reinstating the draft would be bad policy," Bush said in a statement.

Republican lawmakers had insisted the proposal to reinstate the draft — authored by liberal Democrat Charles

Rangel — was doomed from the start.

Americans still have to register for the draft but there have been no compulsory call-ups since 1973.

Members of Congress have been inundated with letters and phone calls from citizens over rumors that the draft is to be reinstated.

Those fears — fanned by Internet websites and blogs — have escalated as fighting intensifies in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Pentagon struggles to keep troop deployments at current strength by extending tours in combat zones and recalling retired soldiers to active duty.

Rangel, a Korean War veteran, said he had proposed the measure to ensure a greater sharing of the burden of military service, which he said now falls disproportionately on the urban working class.

But at a press conference, he called the Republicans' maneuver "hypocrisy of the worst kind" and vowed not to vote for his own bill, which never was allowed to come up for discussion on the House floor or in committee. "It should be subject to hearings and to expert testimony. The administration should come and tell us about our manpower needs, about recruitment and retention, about the extent to which our troops are overextended," Rangel said.

"If they did all of those things in a serious way, they would have to admit that my bill is an option," he said.

Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry said Sunday he had no plans to revive the military draft if he were elected president. President George W. Bush likewise has rejected compulsive  
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