

Sunni Arabs demonstrate

Rally denounces constitution as Shiite, Kurdish document. — International, 8A



High school kicks off

Class AAA champion Central Arkansas Christian knocks off Vilonia. — Sports, 1C, 6C

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In the news

■ **The Rev. Jesse Jackson** met with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and said beforehand that President Bush needed to strongly condemn Pat Robertson's call to assassinate Chavez and that Washington needs to cool down the rhetoric against the South American nation.

■ **Donald Rumsfeld**, U.S. defense secretary, said during a White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation in St. Louis that procedures designed to protect the environment can sometimes jeopardize U.S. troops and should be balanced against military needs.

■ **Jack Abramoff**, the prominent GOP lobbyist, entered through his lawyer an innocent plea in a Miami court to a six-count federal fraud and conspiracy indictment arising from his role in the 2000 purchase of the SunCruz Casinos fleet of gambling boats.

■ **Michael Graham**, a conservative radio host for a Washington radio station, was fired after he refused to apologize for remarks in July calling Islam "a terrorist organization."

■ **Gen. Pervez Musharraf**, Pakistan's president, praised madrassas, or Islamic schools, for helping educate about 1 million of the poorest children in Pakistan, but warned the Islamic seminaries against sheltering terrorists.

■ **Michael Lohan**, 45, isn't entitled to money earned by his celebrity daughter, Lindsay, a Long Island judge ruled, adding that "for all of defendant's professed interest in his children, his criminal ping-pong back and forth between cases reflect extraordinary selfishness and gimmicky schemes to sell the adverse publicity he creates."

■ **Bill Dana**, one of three civilian NASA pilots who flew the X-15 rocket plane to the edge of space in the 1960s, received his astronaut wings at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., along with John Jack McKay and Joe Walker, who were honored posthumously.

■ **Jarrett B. Maupin**, 43, who was driving the Rev. Al Sharpton to Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport after Sharpton visited anti-war activist Cindy Sheehan at her camp in Crawford, was arrested, accused of leading sheriff's deputies on a nine-mile chase at speeds up to 110 mph before state troopers stopped his vehicle.

■ **Jacques Chirac**, president of France, urged Iran to cooperate in nuclear talks or risk having the issue sent to the U.N. Security Council for possible sanctions.

■ **John Brogden**, a senior leader in Australian Prime Minister John Howard's Liberal Party, resigned and apologized for calling the Malaysian-born wife of a former political rival a "mail-order bride," and said it would make him angry if someone directed a similar comment at his wife.

WEATHER

LITTLE ROCK
Today Partly sunny, slight chance of showers.

High Upper 80s, north winds at 10 to 15 mph.
Tonight Mostly clear and cool.

Low Mid-60s.



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Katrina belts Gulf Coast



Lester Thomas, 12, of New Orleans steps through rubble of a building on Terpsichore Street that was destroyed Monday by Hurricane Katrina. He said he rode out the storm in a small house next door with his grandmother and 13 other relatives.

Early toll 55; Biloxi devastated

Editor's note: Reporter Amy Ushaw prepared this report with information from staff reporters Michelle Hillen in New Orleans and Jill Zeman in Mobile, Ala.

NEW ORLEANS — A strong Category 4 Hurricane Katrina slammed the Gulf Coast early Monday morning, drowning neighborhoods from south Louisiana to the Florida Panhandle, killing at least 55 people, knocking out power for hundreds of thousands more and leaving billions of dollars in damage in its wake.

Katrina's final toll is not yet known, in part because little information has come in from the hard-hit areas of Slidell, La., and Bay St. Louis, Miss., and because the considerably weaker storm continued Monday night marching inland across Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee.

Katrina was downgraded to a tropical storm Monday night as it passed through eastern Mississippi, having spent most of a day as an inland hurricane. Winds still blew at a dangerous 65 mph.

Gulf Coast officials are waiting to see what kind of destruction the murky floodwater is hiding.

The Mississippi coastline took the brunt of the massive storm, saving the below-sea-level city of New Orleans from a direct hit with the strongest winds and highest storm surge, which forecasters said would have laid waste to the historic city.

Katrina made landfall at 7 a.m. at the Louisiana bayou town of Buras, southeast of New Orleans, packing sustained winds of 140-145 mph, according to the National Weather Service.

A Category 5 storm until very early Monday, Katrina would have been the first hurricane to target New Orleans in 40 years. Only three Category 5 storms have ever hit the United States.

"God once again has spared the Big Easy," said John Cican Jr., standing outside his French Quarter home on Burgundy Street, where downed trees blocked roads and some roofs had caved in.

Most of the centuries-old buildings near Cican's, however, appeared to have sustained little damage.

"It looks awesome for what it could have been," he said.

Still, Katrina again proved

See **KATRINA**, Page 4A

Stoppers put in oil, gas pipes

Stricken area site of wells, refineries

FROM STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

Hurricane Katrina struck a blow at a major part of the U.S. oil and natural gas industry as the storm rolled across the Gulf of Mexico and made landfall Monday, spiking energy prices.

The effects of the huge storm on oil production will stretch out as refineries along the coast lost power to operate.

"In a lot of these areas of Louisiana and elsewhere that were hit, it will take at least a few days if not longer to restore electric service," said Petral Worldwide Inc. analyst Daniel Lippe.

Meanwhile, the extent of damage to the industry's infrastructure, which could significantly prolong the disruption, may not become apparent for days.

"The real impact isn't going to be known until we've got some more information," said James Williams, an energy economist with Arkansas-based WTRG Economics.

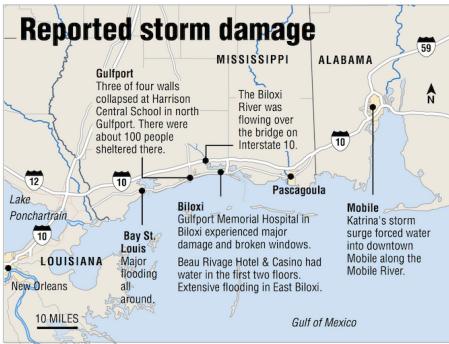
By the end of the day, personnel had evacuated more than 700 offshore platforms and rigs, two rigs had drifted away, and authorities in Alabama had to close a bridge over the Mobile River after a runaway platform ran into the span.

Oil futures briefly climbed above \$70 a barrel for the first time.

The average price for regular gasoline reached about \$2.60 for a gallon, AAA reported Monday. The price could hit \$2.75 by week's end, said Tom Kloza of the Wall, N.J.-based Oil Price Information Service.

"Unfortunately, I don't think

See **OIL**, Page 4A



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Floodwaters in downtown Mobile, Ala., engulf a car near an Interstate 10 entrance ramp close to City Hall.

Storm followed in Camille's footsteps

THE ORLANDO SENTINEL

BILOXI, Miss. — You could call it ground zero, but there was precious little ground to be had.

Much of Biloxi was underwater Monday night, including the town's waterfront, the same scene played out in varying degrees all along the Gulf Coast — from New Orleans to Pensacola, Fla. — after Hurricane Katrina stormed ashore with 140 mph winds Monday.

But no place appeared any harder hit than Biloxi and nearby Gulfport, Miss., towns that 36 years ago endured another horrific hurricane named Camille, which assaulted Mississippi in nearly the exact same place.

"I had no idea it would be this bad," said Greg Bankston, 27, of

Biloxi, who owns a paint store. "My parents, who were here for Camille, said Camille was not this bad."

Biloxi police said they knew of fatalities along the beach but weren't sure of how many. Officers in scuba gear were searching the bay for victims.

Police said those who didn't

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ON THE INSIDE

RELIEF TEAMS, volunteers mobilize in Arkansas to prepare to help storm victims. Page 5A.

WAL-MART command center gears up to respond. Page 1D.

BUSINESS WORLD battered by storm as railroads, insurers deal with headaches. Page 1D.

KATRINA, HIGH OIL prices deliver airlines a one-two punch. Page 1D.



Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

Panel's lack of specifics on base at Jacksonville puzzles state delegates

BY C.S. MURPHY

ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

Three days after the federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission adjourned, Arkansas leaders remain frustrated with the lack of specifics coming out of Washington, D.C., about how the group's decisions will affect Little Rock Air Force Base

in Jacksonville.

Under the proposal announced in May by the Department of Defense, the base stood to gain dozens of planes and thousands of personnel. However, a vote last week to keep open Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota assured the base that it would not receive some

planes that it expected. And, the commission's deliberations and votes on other bases left the overall impact on the Arkansas base up in the air.

"We don't even have a broad outline of some of these things, and when we don't have that, it makes you apprehensive about did they have all these ramifications at the time that they voted," U.S. Rep. Vic Snyder, D-Ark., said Monday afternoon.

Snyder visited the base earlier in the day and said that the personnel he talked to were also in the dark.

"[The committee] made some complicated decisions, and I assume they're trying to

put together information about exactly what the ramifications are," Snyder said. "These are like falling dominos and the dominos can fall in different ways."

The realignment and closure process began in the 1980s to transform the military by cutting excess facilities and combining

See **BASE**, Page 2A