

American Morning

**CNN News**

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**HEADLINE:** Bush's Critics Urge Exit Strategy from Iraq; Hawaiian Community Mourns Marines Killed in Helicopter Crash

**GUESTS:** Janice **Schakowsky**, Andy Borowitz, Jessica Shaw

BILL HEMMER, CNN ANCHOR: Opening bell from Wall Street a few short seconds away. Andy informs us last week, what, stocks finished up to the positive side by .3 percent.

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN, CNN ANCHOR: A smidge.

HEMMER: A smidge, that's right. Which defines a smidge, I think, right? .3 percent. 10,427's your opening mark. Off in trading Friday, down 40 to the negative side. Nasdaq markets off about 11 points in trading Friday. 2,035 is the opening mark there up around Times Square.

O'BRIEN: Although Jack pointed out, if the Dow gains 900 points today, it could all be fine.

HEMMER: That's right. It will be our lead story tomorrow morning. Welcome back, everybody. 9:30 here in New York. In a moment, the Iraqi elections have not done a whole lot just yet to quiet critics of the White House. A Democratic congresswoman, Janice **Schakowsky**, joins us in a moment from Chicago. We'll get her take in what we all witnessed over the weekend.

O'BRIEN: Well, some were talking a little pop culture this morning. "Million Dollar Baby"'s got a fistful of Academy Award nominations. Hilary Swank, Clint Eastwood. Everything but a big box office. Our "90 Second Pop" crew's got a pretty strong idea why.

HEMMER: All right. We'll get to that. In the meantime, here's Carol Costello back with us and

the headlines. Morning.

CAROL COSTELLO, CNN ANCHOR: Good morning to you. Good morning to all of you. "Now in the News." In Kuwait City, a suspected leader of a terrorist cell is now in custody. A Kuwaiti security source says the arrest came after intense fighting between militants and Kuwaiti security troops. At least four militants and a Kuwaiti national guardsman were killed in these clashes.

Was Zoloft to blame? A teenager goes on trial today for killing his grandparents. His attorneys say he did under the influence of Zoloft. Christopher Pittman, now 15, is being tried as an adult for the murders three years ago. The drug manufacturer Pfizer denies any connection between its antidepressant and the killings.

An SBC spokesman is calling it a done deal. SBC Communications confirming this morning that it will indeed acquire AT&T for \$16 billion. Shareholders still have to give their OK. The deal will create one of the biggest communication companies.

And a slow thaw in northern Georgia this morning, after an icy winter blast. That ice storm knocked out electricity for more than 300,000 people over the weekend. The bad weather snarled traffic and caused more than a few headaches at Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson airport. The airport had to shut down. Thousands are still without power right now, but it should not be much longer. At least that's what the utility companies tell us.

HEMMER: You've lived it.

O'BRIEN: I was going to say, we've heard that before.

HEMMER: You've lived in Atlanta when an ice storm hits.

COSTELLO: It's ugly.

HEMMER: Oh my gosh.

COSTELLO: People have no idea how to drive.

HEMMER: The place is -- well, they can't do much about it. But they don't have the equipment to get the ice off the roads, essentially. So you have to wait until the temperatures get above 32 degrees.

COSTELLO: They closed down four highways. The Alabama/Georgia game was canceled over the weekend because people couldn't, like, venture out of their homes.

O'BRIEN: And it's really, really bad or is everybody just really afraid?

HEMMER: Well, on top of all that, let me give you another idea. There are a lot of trees in Atlanta, Georgia, and once the ice starts to get heavy on these power lines, the power lines go

down because the trees are snapping everywhere. And it's just -- it's a frozen mess.

COSTELLO: It's a nightmare.

O'BRIEN: But then it's, you know, a good 40 degrees warmer there today than...

HEMMER: Maybe.

O'BRIEN: Making Carol appreciate it. Well, for months, the Iraqi elections have been high on the Bush administration's agenda. What's next, now that they're over? Many say bringing home our troops should be a top priority.

White House correspondent Suzanne Malveaux joins us this morning with the very latest. Hey, Suzanne, good morning.

SUZANNE MALVEAUX, CNN WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT: Good morning, Soledad. Well, President Bush is reaching out to world leaders, making several calls this morning. Also yesterday, reaching out to the leaders of Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt to talk about the importance of the Iraqi elections. And what's even a surprise to the White House, just how successful this was. But the White House is also being very cautious not to make this kind of a mission accomplished moment, a premature declaration of victory.

We heard from Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, saying that the troops will remain, that they don't have a time-table for that. The U.S. strategy remains the same, to train those Iraqi troops. And while the mood here, of course, is one of vindication, it is also one of caution. President Bush saying, of course, that he hopes that this is a psychological turning point.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GEORGE W. BUSH, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: In this process, Iraqis have had many friends at their side. The European Union and the United Nations gave important assistance in the election process. The American military and our diplomats, working with our coalition partners, have been skilled and relentless, and their sacrifices have helped to bring Iraqis to this day.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MALVEAUX: And Soledad, of course, we expect to hear from the top Democrats, from the Senate and the House, who are calling for an immediate exit strategy by the president. We expect in a couple of days, of course, the State of the Union. There will be an emboldened message saying that he believes that the Iraqi election success means that his true goal of spreading democracy around the world is, in fact, a realistic one -- Soledad.

O'BRIEN: Suzanne Malveaux at the White House for us this morning, dealing with a little bit of traffic and people backing up behind her, as well. Thanks, Suzanne. Be sure to stay with CNN this Wednesday night as President Bush delivers his State of the Union address. Our coverage

begins 9:00 p.m. Eastern time right here on CNN.

HEMMER: So then, Soledad, with the elections now over, there's already talk about when U.S. troops could come home. A U.S. representative, Janice **Schakowsky**, is a Democrat from Illinois. She is live in Chicago, back in her home state. Good morning. Welcome here.

REP. JANICE **SCHAKOWSKY** (D), ILLINOIS: Good morning.

HEMMER: President Bush says that Iraq makes a more secure future for all of us. Do you disagree with that?

**SCHAKOWSKY**: Well, I think we have to get back to why is it that we went to war. Was Iraq a real threat to the United States? The answer has pretty much been proven no. And so, in the euphoria over this election, I think it obscures the real question on do -- should we have gone and even more importantly, should our troops stay there?

HEMMER: But now that that question has been answered, you have to look to build a future there. And in order for any U.S. forces to go home, we are continuing to be told that you're going to need a more stable Iraq to get that done. You said in a statement over the weekend, "as long as U.S. forces are on the ground, a lasting peace and stable Iraq cannot be achieved." Can a stable Iraq be achieved without U.S. forces, do you believe?

**SCHAKOWSKY**: Yes, I think, actually, our occupation is one of the main sources of the insurgency. And that, in fact, now that a real political process has begun, a case can be made that when the U.S. troops leave, that there would be a fostering of a compromise between the Sunnis and the Shiites and a real possibility for a more secure democracy in Iraq could occur. In other words, that the United States itself, as Senator Kennedy has said, has become more of the problem than the solution and that we're a destabilizing force there at this point.

HEMMER: What, then, do you see as an exit strategy?

**SCHAKOWSKY**: I would say that now the United States ought to announce that it is beginning to remove its troops, that we do it in an orderly way, that we do it quickly and that that could be done, particularly now that the elections are over.

HEMMER: Do you worry, though, that draw-down sends the wrong message to insurgents? If you give a deadline for when you're going to go home, doesn't that give your enemy the information you do not want them to have?

**SCHAKOWSKY**: You know, I think that the president has left us with no really good options. But of the options that are available, I think the worst is for our soldiers to continue to be there. Last week was the worst week that we've had. The insurgency is increasing as a result of our presence. And so I think that, among the pretty crummy solutions that the president has left us, withdrawing our troops right now is the best.

HEMMER: Thank you for your time.

**SCHAKOWSKY:** Thank you.