

New puppy  
for Obama  
daughters

AP, Chicago

OK, dad won the presidency, but the election victory yielded a special bonus for Barack Obama's two daughters.

"I love you both so much, and you have earned the new puppy that's coming with us to the White House," Obama told Malia, 10, and Sasha, 7, during his victory speech.

The good news for his daughters came as Obama acknowledged his family's contributions to his campaign. The news prompted even bigger smiles as they surrounded him. He did not go into details about a name or breed for the new White House pet, who will follow in the steps of the Bush family's Scottish terriers, Barney and Miss Beazley.

## Voter turnout best in generations

AP, Washington

America voted in record numbers, standing in lines that snaked around blocks and in some places in pouring rain. Voters who queued up Tuesday and the millions who balloted early propelled 2008 to what one expert said was the highest turnout in a century.

It looks like 136.6 million Americans will have voted for president this election, based on 88 percent of the country's precincts tallied and projections for absentee ballots, said Michael McDonald of George Mason University. Using his methods, that would give 2008 a 64.1 percent turnout rate.

"That would be the highest turnout rate that we've seen since 1908," which was 65.7 percent, McDonald said early Wednesday. It

also would beat the old post World War II high of 63.8 percent in the famed 1960 John F. Kennedy-Richard Nixon squeaker. The 1908 race elected William Howard Taft over William Jennings Bryan.

The total voting in 2008 easily outdistanced 2004's 122.3 million, which had been the highest grand total of voters before.

But another expert disagrees with McDonald's calculations and only puts 2008 as the best in 40 years. Different experts calculate turnout rates in different ways based on whom they consider eligible voters.

Curtis Gans, director of the nonpartisan Committee for the Study of the American Electorate at American University and dean of turnout experts, said his early numbers show 2008 to be about

equal to or better than 1964, but not higher than 1960. He said it looks like total votes, once absentee are tallied (which could take a day or so), will be "somewhere between 134 and 135 million."

What's most interesting about early results is not just how many people voted but the shifting demographic of American voters, said Stephen Ansolabehere, a political science professor at Harvard and MIT.

Using exit polling data, Ansolabehere determined that whites made up 74 percent of the 2008 electorate. That's down considerably from 81 percent in 2000 because of increase in black and Hispanic voting, he said.

"That's a big shift in terms of demographic composition of the electorate," Ansolabehere said

early Wednesday.

Breakdown by party voting also shows that Republican turnout rates are down quite a bit, while Democratic turnout rates are up, Gans said.

Republican states, such as Wyoming and South Dakota, saw turnout drop. "I think they were discouraged," Gans said.

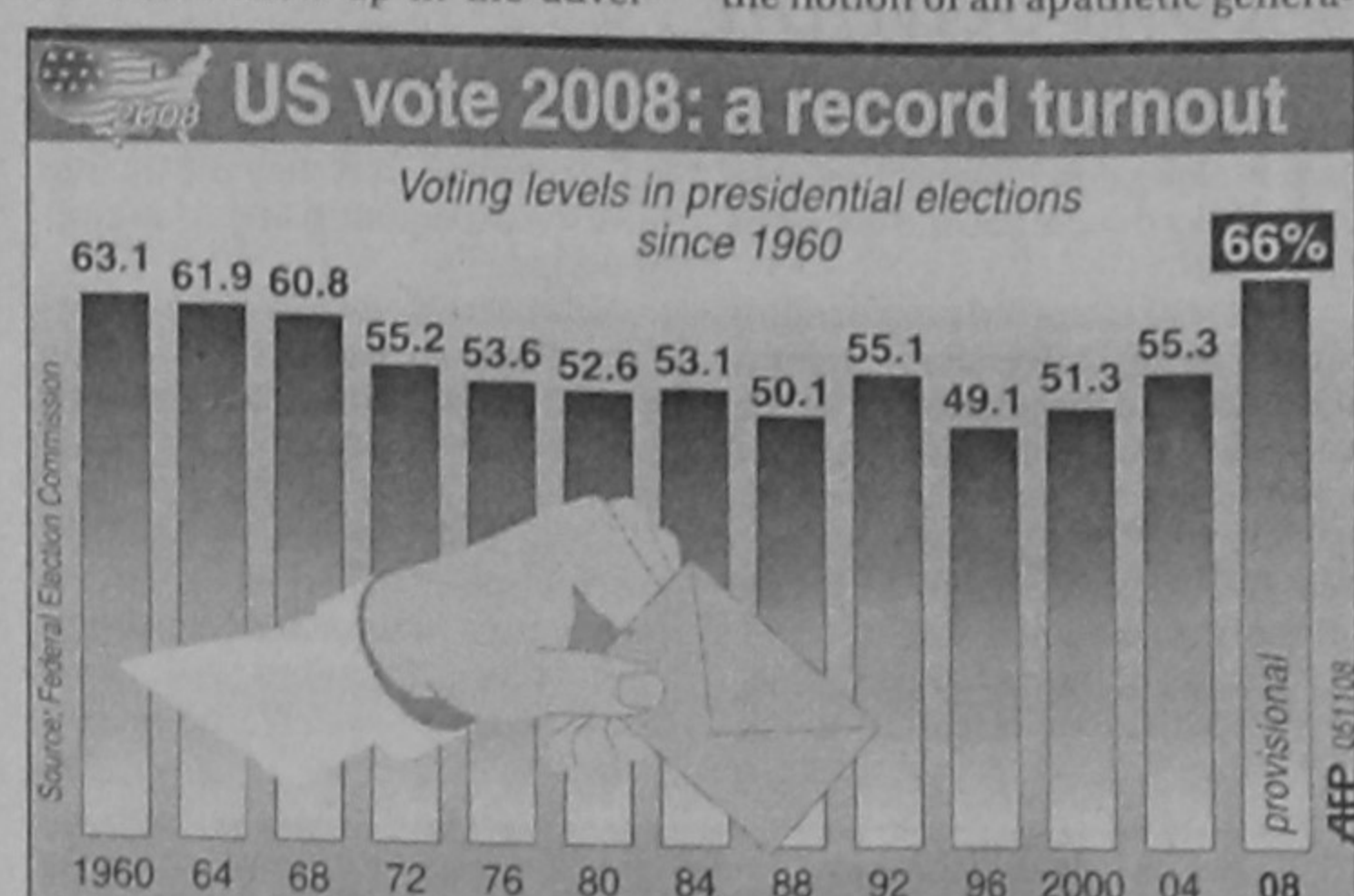
Experts pointed to a weak economy and a lively campaign that promised a history-making result for the high turnout.

North Carolina set a record for its highest turnout rate of eligible voters, because of close presidential, Senate and gubernatorial races, Gans said. Other states where turnout increased were Indiana, Delaware, Virginia and Alabama. The District of Columbia also set a record, he

said.

Ansolabehere said young voters didn't show up in the advertised wave, but others disagreed.

"Young voters have dispelled the notion of an apathetic generation," he said.



tion and proved the pundits, reporters and political parties wrong by voting in record numbers today," said Heather Smith, the executive director of Rock the Vote. "The Millennial generation is making their mark on politics and shaping our future."

Wayne State University nursing student Audrey Glenn, 19, spent four hours waiting to cast her vote in Michigan, in part because Southfield election officials couldn't find her name on their lists.

"But it was all worth it," she said.

Ann Canales, a 47-year-old single mother, emerged from her Texas polling place with a wide grin, accompanied by her 16-year-old son.



Supporters of President Elect Barack Obama embrace at the Boneyard bar on Tuesday night in Denver, Colorado. A group of about 100 African Americans gathered at the popular bar to watch election results.

Obama's transcendence  
is beyond race

AP, Washington

The elevation of Barack Obama to the White House is a transcendent moment, for what this election says about a nation where blacks were once considered property.

And that might be the least of it. This is a once-in-a-lifetime event. At odd intervals 1800, 1860, 1932, 1980 the nation reaches a "pivot point," an election that draws the line between the past and the future. And 2008 appears to be just such a line in the shifting sands of our convulsive times.

Reagan-style conservative supremacy? Over. The era of baby boomer leadership? Waning.

And maybe, just maybe, something new has arrived: a post-partisan approach to governing, founded on the Obama Coalition, fuelled by young and minority voters, powered by the 21st century technologies that helped turn a first-term senator from Illinois into a historic lodestone.

From the beginning, Obama had his sights on something bigger than the "50 percent plus one" approach championed by Karl Rove. He wanted a larger statement.

"Even if other candidates are able to eke out a victory, I think they are less likely to pull in independents and Republicans and new people who are currently not vot-

ing," Obama told The Associated Press 15 months ago.

"I think what people are looking for right now is somebody who can bring the country together and maybe shape the kind of majority that will actually deliver on health care, that will actually deliver on a bold energy strategy, that can actually do something about serious education reform."

On Tuesday, he received the huge wave of support he sought. But will he be able to do all that he promised? Will his ecstatic supporters be satisfied with anything less?

And did Obama really receive a mandate, or was he the beneficiary of the nation's disgust with President Bush, and its unease with America's course?

These are the questions that will be answered over the next four years. But for the moment, some astounding things are certain:

Our next president will be a man who identifies himself as black, but was raised by his white mother, a man who reflects the multiracial society America has become.

He was born in the 1960s, and was too young to experience the Vietnam era that left scars on the nation's psyche for decades. And his lack of experience, central to his opponents' campaigns against him in the primaries and general election, means that he is not necessarily invested in the way things have always been done.

## World leaders hail victory

AFP, Paris

World leaders hailed Barack Obama's triumph Wednesday in the US presidential election as the dawn of a new era and called for the global superpower to change the way it does business.

Obama parties were staged in capitals around the world. A national holiday was declared in Kenya -- where Obama's father was born -- to welcome the first black US president. In Sierra Leone, six newborn babies were even named after the president-elect.

But within hours of Obama's victory speech, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev announced that Russian short-range missiles would be aimed at a US missile shield in Europe, a reminder of the challenges awaiting him in office.

Nothing however could stop the wave of optimism that spread out from the United States after Obama's victory over Republican rival John McCain.

South Africa's iconic first black leader Nelson Mandela said Obama had shown that anyone could change the world.

President Mwai Kibaki, who has declared a national holiday on Thursday to mark Obama's victory, said, "This is a momentous day not only in the history of the United States of America, but also for us in Kenya."

Pope Benedict XVI sent a tele-

gram of congratulations to Obama to hail the "historic occasion".

French President Nicolas Sarkozy extended his "warmest congratulations" to the 47-year-old Democratic senator.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown welcomed the victory as an historic moment. "Barack Obama ran an inspirational campaign, energizing politics with his progressive values and his vision for the future," he said.

China's President Hu Jintao said in a written message: "In a new historical era, I look forward to... taking our bilateral relationship of constructive cooperation to a new level."

Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso pledged to work with the new US leader to strengthen relations.

Indian Premier Manmohan Singh called it an "extraordinary" victory while Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said Obama's victory was a landmark for equality 45 years after Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech.

European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso said in a statement: "This is a time for a renewed commitment between Europe and the United States of America."

Medvedev, who was himself elected president in March, called for "constructive dialogue" in a message to Obama.

Earlier however, during his first

state-of-the-nation address, he announced that Iskander missiles would be based in the western territory of Kaliningrad to "neutralise" US missile defence plans.

With wars in Iraq and Afghanistan heading White House priorities abroad, there were also calls for a change of tack on the US "War on Terror" launched after the September 11, 2001 attacks.

The "War on Terror" cannot be fought in Afghan villages... Afghanistan is the victim of terrorism," Afghan President Hamid Karzai said.

Obama's election would not lead to a quick US disengagement from Iraq, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari said.

"We don't think there will be change in policy overnight. There won't be quick disengagement here. A great deal is at stake here," Zebari told AFP.

Outgoing Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said he was certain US-Israeli ties would strengthen under Obama.

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, a vociferous critic of the Bush administration, said in a statement: "We are convinced that the time has come to establish new relations between our countries and with our region, on a basis of respect of sovereignty, equality and true cooperation."

Obama's supporters celebrated in major capitals around the world.

Hard choices and challenges  
follow triumph

THE WASHINGTON POST ONLINE, Washington

After a victory of historic significance, Barack Obama will inherit problems of historic proportions.

Not since Franklin D. Roosevelt was inaugurated at the depths of the Great Depression in 1933 has a new president been confronted with the challenges Obama will face as he starts his presidency.

At home, Obama must revive an economy experiencing some of the worst shocks in more than half a century.

Abroad, he has pledged to end the war in Iraq and defeat al-Qaeda and the Taliban. He ran on a platform to change the country and its politics.

Now he must begin to spell out exactly how.

Obama's winning percentage appears likely to be the largest of any Democrat since Lyndon Johnson's 1964 landslide. And like Johnson, he will govern with sizable congressional majorities.

But with those advantages come hard choices.

Interpreting his mandate will be only one of several critical decisions Obama must make as he prepares to assume the presidency.

Others include transforming his campaign promises on taxes, health care, energy and education into a set of legislative priorities.

Obama's victory speech touched the themes of unity, reconciliation and hope that were at the heart of his candidacy.

Asking for the help of all Americans to tackle the country's most serious challenges, he prepared supporters and opponents alike for patience before they succeeded.

"The road ahead will be long," he said.

"Our climb will be steep. We may not get there in one year or even one term, but America -- I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will get there. I promise you -- we as a people will get there."

Obama's ability to manage relationships with Democratic with Republicans and with impatient liberal constituencies will have a lasting impact on his presidency.

Can he, for example, fulfill his promise to govern in a unifying and inclusive way, and yet also push an ambitious progressive agenda?

The first African American elected to the presidency, Obama built his victory with a new

Democratic coalition. To the party's base of African Americans, Latinos and women, Obama added younger voters and wealthier, better-educated ones. That helped him raise his support among white voters -- a traditional weakness of recent Democratic presidential candidates.

Former House speaker Newt Gingrich (R) said the senator from Illinois can claim a personal mandate but should not assume the results signified an ideological election.

Rep Rahm Emanuel (Ill.), the fourth-ranking Democrat in the House, argued that "no crisis should go to waste," meaning that the depth of the country's problems create an opportunity for the next president to offer big solutions on issues like energy and health care.

Emanuel is under consideration to become White House chief of staff, but he said his comments represented his own view, not Obama's.

Obama advisers, who agreed to talk about the future only on the condition that they not be quoted, said they are well aware of the dangers of interpreting the results as a mandate for unabashed liberal government.

36 Afghan wedding guests  
killed in US strike

AFP, Wocha Bakhta

Weeping Afghan villagers said yesterday that a wedding party was turned into a bloodbath after foreign troops unleashed a massive attack thinking they were targeting insurgents.

Residents of Wocha Bakhta village, 80 kilometres (50 miles) north of the southern city of Kandahar, said 36 people were killed and others wounded in hours of fighting Monday.

There was no immediate confirmation of the number of dead. The US military acknowledged there were casualties and said it was investigating.

Villagers told an AFP reporter that a wedding lunch had just ended and the bride was preparing to say farewell to her family when it was believed a Taliban insurgent fired at international troops on a nearby hill.

The soldiers returned fire into the village and called for air support, said a man who gave his name

as Abdul Jalil and said he was a cousin of the wounded bride.

"They surrounded the village. From 2:00 pm until 12 at night they kept the village under fire from helicopters, jet fighters and troops on the ground," Jalil said.

The father of the bride, Roobeen Khan, said he had lost six relatives.

"My wounded son was in my arms, right here, bleeding," he cried, standing next to a large blood stain. "He died last night."

"I lost two sons, two grandsons, a nephew, my mother and a cousin," Khan wailed, adding "Why? Why?"

His daughter was among seven of his relatives who were wounded. The groom survived but his father, mother and sister were killed, he said.

Villagers showed AFP a large compound that they said was turned into rubble by the strikes while body parts and blood stains could be seen in the area. There were 16 freshly filled graves, three of children.

Pakistan army  
kills 15 more  
militants

AP, AFP, Khari Peshawar

A Pakistani government official says an army air strike has destroyed a suspected militant training facility and killed fifteen insurgents on the Pakistan side of the Afghan border.

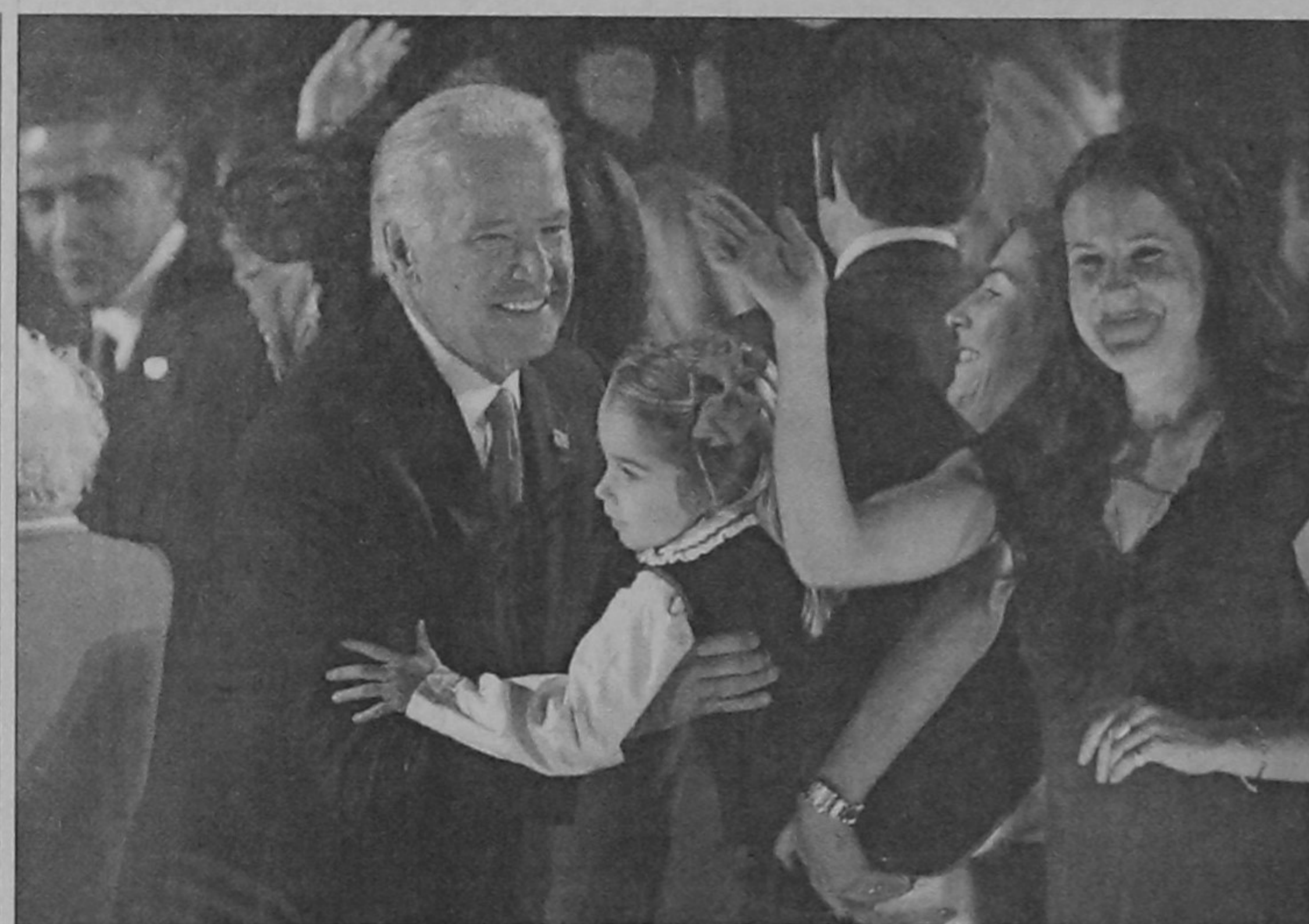
Jamil Khan, the No. 2 representative of government in the semiautonomous Bajur tribal region, said Wednesday the overnight raid flattened several buildings near the village of Damadola.

Pakistani security forces have been fighting militants in various parts of the border region since August, but attacks in Damadola are rare.

The army says it has killed over 1,500 militants in Bajur since August.

American forces have fired missiles at suspected hide-outs of al-Qaeda's No. 2 leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in the Damadola region in recent years.

Meanwhile, Islamist militants in restive northwest Pakistan said Wednesday they had released 12 students who were kidnapped on suspicion of spying for the government.



Vice-President elect Joe Biden holds his granddaughter Natalie during an election night gathering in Grant Park on Tuesday in Chicago, Illinois.

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