

GI SPECIAL 2#B29

THIS IS HOW BUSH BRINGS THE TROOPS HOME



Medical personnel treat Staff Sgt. Gary Jackson at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington on June 29. Shaun Heasley / Reuters file

The Battle For Najaf: Sadr Wounded

August 13, 2004 Australian Broadcasting Company

Rebel Iraqi cleric Moqtada al-Sadr has been wounded during the US bombardment of the holy city of Najaf, but his exact condition is unknown, two of his spokesmen have said.

The US military on Thursday launched a massive assault on Najaf, home to the Imam Ali shrine, revered by Shiites the world over.

"Sayyed Moqtada was wounded in American bombing," spokesman Ahmad al-Shinabi told Reuters.

"He suffered three injuries to his body," he said.

"We don't know his exact condition or to where he was taken."

Another Sadr aide said the cleric was wounded early Friday morning.

"It happened at about 7:00 am (0300 GMT) inside the old city," said Ali al-Yasseri.

MORE:

Pincer Movement Against Mahdi Army Forces: Deputy Governor Of Najaf Quits, Denouncing U.S. Terrorism; Deputy President Of Iraq Condemns U.S. Attack

The fighting between U.S. forces and Sadr's Mehdi Army in Najaf is part of a broader Shi'ite uprising in at least seven southern and central cities.

August 13, 2004 By Nicolas Rothwell, Middle East correspondent, The Australian & 11, 12 August 2004 Reuters (inc. By Khaled Farhan) & 11 August 2004 By Donald Macintyre in Baghdad, Independent Digital (UK) Ltd & Aug 12 (AFP) & Associated Press & August 11, 2004 Todd Pitman, Canadian Press & August 11. 2004 New York Times & Aug. 11 (Bloomberg) & Aljazeera.net 10 August 2004

Correspondents embedded with US troops in Najaf said a pincer movement, supported by air power, began on Thursday morning, local time, with the aim of trapping the insurgents in their hide-outs.

Shiite militia loyal to Moqtada Sadr were in control Thursday of Najaf's centre despite a fierce US military offensive as a senior aide to the radical cleric vowed to fight to the bitter end.

Militiamen were in control of a radius of about two kilometers (a mile) around the Imam Ali mausoleum, an AFP correspondent reported from outside the shrine at about 1:00 pm (0900 GMT).

Drawing what he called "Najaf's military map", a Mahdi Army spokesman said the city was under the control of al-Mahdi Army in the east, west and south.

The north, towards Karbala, has been under the control of US and Iraqi government forces and that is why there are continuing clashes in Wadi al-Salam cemetery in the north, al-Shibani said.

He said: "The cemetery is now under the control of the Mahdi Army. We escorted a number of media reporters and cameramen on Monday to the area to show that the cemetery is controlled by the Mahdi Army."

“We are ready to fight until the last drop of blood if this is what the Americans want,” said the white-turbaned Sheikh Ali al-Sumeisim surrounded by armed men.

Mortar fire and sporadic gunfire broke out in the Najaf cemetery, **with one mortar round wounding two American soldiers.**

U.S. troops said they were impressed with militants' tenacity in Najaf. U.S. forces have pounded Sadr's militiamen for days, but have been unable to dislodge them.

"We keep pushing south and they just keep coming," said Capt. Patrick McFall, from the 1st Cavalry Division.

American officers said the command in Baghdad was preparing to move another 1,000 American troops into the city, on top of the 2,000 already available to commanders there, with a view to pressuring the rebels and adding punch to a new offensive.

Two U.S. Army infantry battalions and an aviation battalion are working with the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit to prepare to put down the insurgency alongside Iraqi National Guardsmen.

Tanks blocked roads leading to the mosque, while US troops broadcast messages in Arabic saying the offensive was aimed at Sadr's militia.

US armoured vehicles were seen entering the Al-Ishtiraki neighbourhood in the eastern part of Najaf as US helicopters hovered overhead amid the sound of heavy explosions.

The Mehdi Army attacked an Iraqi police checkpoint in the city, killing and wounding several uniformed men.

Najaf deputy governor Jawdat Kadam Najem al-Kuraishi quit in protest. “I resign from my post denouncing all the US terrorist operations they are doing against this holy city,” he said.

On Thursday, a member of Najaf's city council resigned after an unknown group kidnapped his father, Najaf governor Adnan Zurufi said.

Jawdat Kadhem al-Qureishi's father was snatched earlier in the week, and kidnappers demanded the councilman resign in return for his release, Zurufi said. It was not immediately clear who the kidnappers were or whether the incident was related to the current fighting.

US marines claimed to control the city centre. **But hundreds of rebels were believed to have dispersed in the tunnels beneath Najaf's cemetery.**

The mosque broadcast its own message, urging fighters to defend Najaf. “God bless our courageous mujaheddin,” the message said.

US military officials have made clear the rebellion will be crushed at all costs, despite criticism by Iraqi Deputy President Ibrahim al-Jaffari, who last night described the US onslaught as "vicious".

Ibrahim al-Jaafari, Iraq's interim vice president, called on the U.S. troops to withdraw from Najaf. "Only Iraqi forces should stay in Najaf. These forces should be responsible for security and should save Najaf from this phenomenon of killing," al-Jaafari told Arab TV network Al-Jazeera from London on Wednesday.

In response to deputy president Jaafari's comments, spokesmen for the prime minister, president and the U.S. military appeared surprised but had no immediate reaction.

Jaafari is a respected politician who heads the Shi'ite Muslim Dawa Party, one of the largest Muslim groups in Iraq.

The U.S. military said Iraqi forces were actively involved in the offensive, although witnesses said American troops were doing most of the fighting. (Another really silly lie courtesy of the U.S. Command. Every reporter, no matter how pro-Occupation, says the U.S. forces are doing the fighting.)

The Mehdi Army raised the prospect of a bloody battle, vowing no surrender and saying Sadr was leading the defence at the shrine and vast cemetery, one of the Middle East's largest.

"The morale of the fighters is very high," said Ahmed al-Shibani, a senior Sadr spokesman in Najaf.

"An American sniper did this to an ordinary civilian, 16-years-old," says this man.

"This is democracy? This was planned by the Iraqi Government and the price is Iraqi civilians. The price is my nephew."

GET SOME TRUTH: CHECK OUT THE NEW TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupation, the cuts to veterans' benefits, or the dangers of depleted uranium - is the first reason Traveling Soldier is necessary. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance - whether it's in the streets of Baghdad, New York, or inside the armed forces. Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces. If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers.
<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/>

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

CH-53 Copter Shot Down, Two Marines Dead

Associated Press August 12, 2004

Two U.S. Marines were killed when a CH-53 helicopter crashed landed in the volatile Anbar province west of Baghdad, the military said Thursday. Three other people were injured in the crash Wednesday night.

Soldiers Wounded In Baquba

11 August 2004 Aljazeera.net

Two US military vehicles were destroyed and a number of US soldiers injured in a blast south of Baquba city.

Briton Killed In Basra Ambush

12/08/2004 Telegraph Group Ltd.

A British soldier has been killed and another seriously injured in a roadside bomb blast in the southern Iraqi city of Basra.

The ambush happened as troops from the 1st Bn the Black Watch, based in Perth, Scotland, were patrolling the city this morning, the Ministry of Defence said.

The blast, caused by an improvised device, happened before thousands of angry Iraqis took to the streets in Basra to protest against an American-led offensive on Najaf.

Resistance Attacks Government Hq In Kut; Polish Troops Stand Aside; U.S. Night Bombing Slaughters Civilians

WARSAW, Aug 11 (AFP) & 2004-08-13 ASIA NEWS NETWORK & Associated Press
August 12, 2004 & 2004-08-11 Mideast Online & AFP 8.12.04 & 11 August 2004
Aljazeera.net

Iraqi national guards and rebels clashed in the southern Iraqi city of Kut, 160 miles southeast of Baghdad, Wednesday, killing and injuring several people on both sides, a spokesman for the Polish multinational force said.

"Groups of armed rebels attacked city hall, as well as police and national guard posts and barracks. There are deaths and injuries on both sides," Artur Domanski said according to Polish news agency PAP.

But he said that troops belonging to the multinational force under Polish command would not be used to defend public buildings in the city.

A number of explosions have been heard in different areas of Kut, where members of al-Mahdi Army have surrounded Iraqi national forces and police headquarters, particularly in the al-Hai neighbourhood.

Earlier in the day, two Iraqi national guards were killed in Kut when militias blocked city roads and besieged the regional governor's building, according to an AFP correspondent.

Sadr's Mehdi Army militiamen had blocked off streets and besieged the governor's office in the eastern part of the town, armed with Kalashnikovs and rocket-propelled grenades, as US planes flew overhead.

The fighting between some 400 Sadr supporters and coalition forces lasted until midnight, the Iraqi interior minister said today.

Two Iraqi national guardsmen and three policemen were wounded.

The clashes broke out at around 7:30 am (0330 GMT), as militiamen blocked off streets in the Shiite city

Sadr's Mehdi Army forces, armed with Kalashnikovs and rocket-propelled grenades, fought with Iraqi National Guard and police as US planes flew overhead.

There were also clashes outside a local government building in western Kut.

<p>Governorate spokesman Majid Hameed said a written death threat was delivered to the governor because of his refusal to bend to the demands of Sadr's supporters that Kut be ceded to a separate south independent from Baghdad.</p>

The region's governor was contacting the militants to seek a peaceful resolution to the fighting.

Heavy overnight US bombing of Kut killed 75 people and wounded nearly 150.

Kut hospital director Khader Fadal Arar said many of the dead and wounded were women and children.

"We have 75 killed and 148 wounded, according to what the hospitals in Kut have told us," said spokeswoman May Abdul Karim.

Police Colonel Salam Fakhri said the bombing started at 1:00 am (2100 GMT Wednesday) and lasted until 3:00 am.

"The bombing was concentrated in the al-Sharkia district as the US military felt there were a lot of Shiite militiamen in that area. It also has an office of Moqtada Sadr," he said.

There has been a heavy US patrol presence since Wednesday in al-Sharkia, a densely populated Shiite district whose simple mud houses pancaked in the bombing.

"We were sleeping when there was loud noise of planes above us and suddenly there were explosions," said local resident Ibrahim Sultan. "The explosion damaged my house and killed my son."

Al-Sharkia was in misery by sunrise, with grown men, women and children wiping away the tears before the wreckage of their homes as others mourned the loss of relatives.

"We never expected to see so many bodies. Our hospital beds are full and many wounded are still lying in the corridor," said Arar.

"At least 15 wounded are in the operation theatre, many of whom will have to have their limbs amputated."

Lying in the corridor was fruit-seller Karim Ghadban who was brought in unconscious, after one of his relatives was killed and eight wounded in the bombing, four of them children.

"We were sleeping on the roof as there was no electricity at night. And when I woke up I was in the hospital," Ghadban said.

Sadr's Kut office was also flattened in the bombing, said partisan Sheikh Mohammed Yihyah.

"Our office has been destroyed because it was in the same district, fortunately there were no one in the office, that's why we have no casualties. Perhaps they thought it would be full of militiamen," he said.

War In A Graveyard: Cemetery Becomes Battleground



8.10.04 Mahdi Army resistance soldier holds the helmet of a US soldier during clashes in Najaf. (AFP/Ahmad al-Rubaye)

August 12, 2004 By Todd Pitman, Associated Press

Unexploded rockets stick out of tombstones. **Booby-trapped artillery shells lie buried on narrow lanes lined with crypts. Guerrilla fighters hide in a vast sea of pockmarked graves filled with underground tunnels, letting loose with rocket-propelled grenades and mortar fire.**

One of the largest cemeteries in the Muslim world has become an eerie battleground for U.S. troops who have fought Shiite guerrillas for nearly a week in Najaf. ***For dozens of Iraqis and a handful of Americans, it's also become a graveyard.***

"It's bad luck, but we gotta do what we gotta do," Staff Sgt. Jose Resto said Wednesday while walking behind a Bradley fighting vehicle in the Valley of Peace cemetery, cradling an M-4 carbine as explosions echoed in the distance.

Hundreds of thousands -- perhaps millions -- of people are buried in the graveyard, which covers nearly 5 square miles sprawling out from the outskirts of the Imam Ali shrine, one of the holiest in Shia Islam.

Early Wednesday, a convoy of 18 Humvees and Bradley fighting vehicles carrying 97 men from the 1st Cavalry Division -- **whose soldiers write their blood types on their helmets in case they are wounded** -- rolled up to a low wall on a deserted street outside the cemetery.

Almost immediately, they started fighting al-Sadr's men.

The soldiers climbed to the top of a blown-out, single-story tomb and shot briefly at insurgent positions in buildings on the cemetery's far side, with Bradleys adding fire from their automatic cannon.

"Target destroyed," a voice crackled over the radios.

"Never in my life would I have expected we'd be fighting in a graveyard," said the company commander, Capt. Patrick McFall, 30. "Every day I think about the families whose loved ones are buried here."

Dirt paths crisscross the cemetery, which is filled with heavy tombs, some made of concrete, others of brick. Some have rounded brown clay domes with Arabic inscriptions. The more elaborate tombs feature green and blue domes, locked doors and even stairs that lead to underground rooms. Framed black-and-white photographs of the dead hang inside caged, turquoise crypts.

The graveyard is so congested that many tombs sit side by side, some inches apart, some leaning into each other.

For guerrilla fighters, it's a perfect place to hide.

"You can hear' em but you can't see'em," McFall said. "They're hiding down in the catacombs. All you hear is 'phssst'," he said, mimicking the sound of a passing bullet.

As parts of McFall's company pushed slowly south, it crossed narrow, sandy lanes strewn with rocks and bullet casings. Some were so narrow that tombstones scratched the sides of the Bradleys. Soldiers found a roadside bomb: an artillery shell in the road and wires leading away from it. They blew it up.

Later al-Sadr militiamen started firing mortars, sending up gray plumes of smoke across the skyline. One round slammed into a tomb 10 yards from McFall, shaking his armored Humvee. No one was injured.

On Tuesday U.S. helicopter gunships had pummeled a multistory hotel 400 yards from the cemetery with rockets, missiles and 30 mm cannons. The military said about 20 people were killed inside the building.

By Wednesday, more militants were in the scorched building, firing at the Americans.

"We keep pushing south and they just keep coming," McFall said. "I think they got a reproduction facility down there. I think they're cloning."

A Bradley in front of McFall began pounding the charred building with a 25 mm cannon, sending up sparks and blasting away chunks of concrete. The hotel's roof soon caught fire -- soldiers said from either fuel or weapons caches -- darkening the sky with smoke.

Resto, the sergeant, said that when his Bradley unit swept through tombs this week, they found some tunnels and collapsed them with fragmentation grenades.

"We don't risk American lives," he said. "When we see there are tunnels, we throw down grenades."

On Wednesday, he searched one crypt with a blue door. It was empty when he examined it on Tuesday, but now he found empty cans, water basins and RPG boosters. "Somebody crept back in there overnight," he said.

Later, Resto and several other U.S. soldiers sat against the light green wall of a mausoleum, eating military rations and discussing the wisdom of war and whether George W. Bush or John Kerry would make a better president.

Two rocket-propelled grenades whooshed overhead, exploding nearby. None of the soldiers flinched.

"We've been out here a few days," said Pvt. Henry Salice, 24. "This is an eerie place. ... You get used to it."

The Major Has The Mission Clearly In Mind

Associated Press August 12, 2004 & Aug 11, 2004, By Khaled Farhan, NAJAF, Iraq (Reuters)

Taking the Najaf Imam Ali Mosque itself was not the objective, said U.S. Marine Maj. David Holahan, executive officer of the 1st Battalion, 4th Marines Regiment. Holahan said, "but it might be."

The New York Times said that after preparing for a major attack on militia loyal to cleric Moqtada al-Sadr in Najaf on Wednesday, U.S. forces called it off as it was about to begin.

Mahdi Army Controls Baghdad's Sadr City; But Not "Always" U.S. Capt. Says; Madhi Soldiers Chase A Tank

August 12, 2004 By MARIAM FAM, The Associated Press & Aug 11, 2004 By Khaled Farhan, (Reuters) & August 11. 2004, New York Times

BAGHDAD, Iraq - In the vast Baghdad slum of Sadr City, Shiite militiamen direct traffic, search cars, set up roadblocks and even claim to make arrests.

On Wednesday, there were no police in sight, as the fighters set tires ablaze to melt the road's asphalt, apparently to plant bombs meant for U.S. patrols. No one intervened as the militiamen directed traffic in their unique way; once a fighter fired two shots in the air as a warning to a car driving on the wrong side of the road.

In a Baghdad slum district called Sadr City where armed fighters have roamed at will. **Two U.S. tanks thrust into the suburb, pursued by militiamen who fired at least one rocket-propelled grenade at the vehicles.**

The fighters are from the Mahdi Army, followers of cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. They now appear almost entirely in control in parts of this neighborhood of 2 million people in the Iraqi capital.

"Sadr City has almost fallen into our hands now," boasted Ayad Ali, a 25-year-old Mahdi Army fighter. "If a police car came here, we would attack it right away."

Fighting has persisted here for more than a week, sparked by clashes between the heart of al-Sadr's militia and U.S. forces in the city of Najaf. While U.S. and Iraqi officials deny the militants have control, one fighter, Odai Sada, boasts that his cohorts do everything from clear trash to detain thieves.

Residents and fighters say that by now, police rarely emerge from their stations - because of either fear or sympathy.

Capt. Brian O'Malley of the 1st Brigade Combat Team in charge of the area said police still patrol the neighborhood. **O'Malley argued that the Mahdi Army shows more power than it actually has. "They try and take control but it doesn't always work," he said. ("It doesn't *always* work"? That would have been a great line for General Custer at Little Big Horn.)**

Interior Ministry spokesman Sabah Kadhim agreed.

"They control a street or an area and then they leave," he said. **"This happens sometimes when there's a security vacuum." (Talk about lame.)**

Reporters returning from another day of skirmishes said practically all of Sadr City appeared to be under the effective control of militiamen who hide down side streets and alleys, promising a potential bloodbath in the event of any full-scale challenge from the Americans and Iraq's new security forces.

In response to the violence, the government imposed a 4 p.m. curfew on the neighborhood.

Mr. Sadr, who vowed Monday that he would fight "to the last drop of my blood," showed his canny, mocking brand of politics when an aide in Baghdad announced that the Mahdi Army had declared a curfew across the capital, starting at 1 p.m. and ending at 8 p.m. the next day, beginning immediately and continuing until hostilities against Mr. Sadr's fighters end. A day earlier, American forces imposed an indefinite curfew on Sadr City, one of the cleric's strongholds, ordering the slum's two million people off the streets from 4 p.m. to 8 a.m., the most stringent curfew in the 16 months since American troops captured Baghdad.

A representative of Mr. Sadr in Baghdad, Qais al-Khazali, called on "all citizens, and especially employees" to obey the curfew and remain at home during the curfew hours, and to support the militiamen in their fight against the Americans. In a statement

broadcast on the Arabic-language television channel Al Arabiya, he renewed the militiamen's warnings to Iraqi police, soldiers and national guardsmen, saying they should refuse to "assist the occupiers," or face reprisals.

The Sadr curfew, and a video-taped warning from another Sadr-linked group of attacks on Iraqi government workers who report for duty, appeared aimed at crippling the capital's economy. American commanders have said that 15,000 jobs provided to Sadr City residents to work on \$70 million in new sewer, water and electricity projects have been scuttled, at least for now, by the uprising in the slum.

The rebels' call for a citywide curfew appeared to have an almost immediate effect. By late afternoon on Tuesday, a tour of half a dozen of the city's inner neighborhoods showed that traffic that has choked many streets since the American-led invasion last year was sharply down. Gas stations that have had long lines in recent weeks after rebel attacks on refineries, pipelines and road tankers were mostly empty, or closed. Many other businesses were shuttered, and those that were open said they were ready to shut at a moment's notice.

For American commanders, one reason for mounting a full-scale offensive on Sadr City would be to curb attacks on Baghdad. Since the uprising in the spring, the United States command has concentrated mainly on containing the Sadr militiamen in the slum, not challenging their control there.

But leaving Mr. Sadr's fighters free rein has meant that Sadr City has become a Shiite counterpart to Falluja, the Sunni Muslim city 35 miles west of Baghdad. Falluja has been under rebel control since a Marine offensive there was halted in the spring. As long as the two cities are under rebel control, they will pose a threat to any effort to achieve lasting stability in Baghdad.

The threat from Sadr City has been underscored in recent days by repeated nighttime mortar and rocket volleys fired from somewhere in the vicinity of the slum and aimed at the International Zone, the newly renamed American command center in what used to be Mr. Hussein's Republican Palace compound.

Americans officers have often mocked the errant marksmanship of the Iraqi rebels. But the volleys recently have become much heavier, sometimes as many as 30 heavy mortars and battlefield rockets in a night, and an increasing number of them have struck inside the secured zone, where the Americans and Dr. Allawi work.

On Monday night, one shell hit and severely wounded the Iraqi interpreter for General Casey, the American military commander. American officials said the man was expected to survive.

**Support For Sadr Grows;
Shiites Angry At Fighting In Najaf;**

5000 March In Basra

Aug. 12, 2004 MARIAM FAM, Associated Press & 12 August, 2004 By Khaled Farhan, (Reuters) & By ALEX BERENSON and TERENCE NEILAN, New York Times & 12/08/2004 Norman Hermant, *Lateline*, Australian Broadcasting Corporation & more Associated Press August 12, 2004 & BBC 8.11 & August 11, 2004, Todd Pitman, Canadian Press & 2004-08-11 Middle East Online

BAGHDAD: Iraqi Shiites expressed anger Thursday at a major U.S.-led assault on a rebel militia in the holy city of Najaf, warning the violence could spread to other parts of the country and damage the political process.

"This will lead to revenge for the holy sites and for those killed," said Salama al-Khafaji, a former member of the disbanded Governing Council.

In the southern Shiite city of Basra, nearly 5,000 al-Sadr sympathizers took to the streets Thursday, demanding U.S. troops withdraw from Najaf and condemning Prime Minister Ayad Allawi for his perceived support of the Americans.

"Allawi and the governor of Najaf are responsible for this massacre," said Abed Jassim, a Shiite in Basra. "They provided protection for the Americans to kill the Shiites."

Najaf, home to some of the most senior Shiite clerics and respected ancient seminaries, has a special place in the hearts of Shiites. After Saddam Hussein's ouster, the city emerged as the spiritual and political hub for Iraq's Shiite majority.

In an effort to avoid a Shiite backlash, Iraqi and U.S. military officials said **any assault near the militants' refuge in the shrine would be led by Iraqi forces, many of whom have only minimal training - in an effort to ease anger from the Shiite majority if the offensive damages the shrine where many insurgents have taken refuge. (As if anybody's going to be fooled by this particular silly bullshit.)**

The U.S. military said Wednesday it was holding *joint exercises with Iraqi national guardsmen in preparation* for the planned assault. (A little late for combat training?)

"Preparations to do the offensive are taking longer than initially anticipated," said Maj. David Holahan.

Sheik Jalal Eddin al-Sagheer, a Shiite cleric, said he and others were angry at seeing Najaf under attack, even if they did not support al-Sadr.

"Let's say Muqtada is the pinnacle of terrorism and extremism, still how can such a holy city with its special status be treated that way?" he said. "No one can accept targeting people in that manner."

Al-Khafaji, who has taken part in mediation efforts between al-Sadr and the U.S. and Iraqi authorities, said the military operations and the loss of life would harm the image of

the Americans and Iraq's interim government. **"This is not in the interest of America," she said.**

Naseer Hussein, who works in Baghdad's mostly Shiite Kazimiya neighborhood warned that fighting in Najaf could cause a rift between Iraqis and the government, and create divisions among Shiites.

"I would sacrifice myself and anything I own for the sake of these holy sites," al-Khafaji said. "We ask the international community to intervene to stop this human massacre."

As news of the offensive filtered in, thousands of Shi'ites took to the streets in Basra and a Baghdad district to protest.

"Long live Sadr, America and Allawi are infidels," thousands of protesters in Basra chanted.

A similar protest took place in Baghdad's Shi'ite neighborhood of Kadhimiyah. "Allawi is the enemy of God," they chanted.

"We warn and say that all the cities will become Najaf if the shedding of blood continues."

The demonstrations follow big protests in the streets of Nassiriya and several other cities on Wednesday

Overnight clashes between insurgents and British forces in the southern city of Amarah killed 20 people and wounded 50, according to Interior Ministry spokesman Adnan Abdul Rahman. **The British reported two minor casualties among their own troops.**

British troops clashed with militiamen for about an hour late Tuesday when their tanks tried to cross a bridge into the city.

For three hours from 1:00 am (2100 GMT), British jets bombed three districts of the city where militiamen are believed to be holed up, damaging six houses and cutting off electricity supplies.

British tanks and troops were out in force in Amara after sunrise, **with Iraqi police hunkered down in their stations.**

In the southern Hussein neighbourhood, among those bombed overnight, British forces used tear gas, according to witness Saad Kadhim Mohammed.

Sadr supporters patrolled Amara, warning people via loudspeakers to stay at home and announcing that they would impose a curfew from 7:00 pm.

In Baghdad, the Mahdi Army attacked a police station.

Army spokesman Major Ian Clooney said **militants had also targeted coalition patrols with mortars and rocket propelled grenades in the southern cities of Nasiriyah, Basra and Samawah.**

"The insurgents are using cover and buildings to launch indirect attacks rather than open conflict," he added.

**OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION
BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME NOW!**

US Command Storms Al-Sadr's Home; (He Isn't There, But It Will Look Good On TV)

12 August, 2004 NAJAF, Iraq (Reuters)

U.S. forces have stormed the home of rebel Iraqi Shi'ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr in the holy city of Najaf, witnesses say.

They said servicemen went into the house in the centre of the city

The cleric was believed to be at Imam Ali shrine, some two km (one mile) away.

(Command made sure there was a TV crew along in a silly try to impress the folks back home for the evening news.)

NOBODY HOME:



TIME TO GO HOME, ALL THE WAY HOME

Air Force Civilian Casualty

August 12, 2004 United States Department of Defense News Release No. 771-04

The Department of Defense announced today the death of a Department of the Air Force civilian.

Rick A. Ulbright, 49, of Waldorf, Md., was assigned to the 33rd Field Investigative Squadron, Andrews Air Force Base, Md. He died Aug. 8 at Kirkuk Air Base, Iraq, from wounds received during a mortar attack.

“A Sharp Increase In U.S. Casualties” Black Hawks Scramble To Save U.S. Troops

Aug 11, 2004 By Matthew Green, TAJI, Iraq (Reuters)

An American soldier screams as medics hoist him into a helicopter on a stretcher, his face twisted with pain from shrapnel wounds to his arm and head.

Roaring rotor blades drown out the young man's cry as the Black Hawk lurches upwards, its wheels seeming to brush the flat roofs of central Baghdad in a full-throttle race to hospital.

For U.S. medics riding to the airborne rescue of the wounded, a surge in fighting in Iraq since Aug. 5 has shattered weeks of relative calm at their base.

Working round the clock, **crews have tripled their missions since the clashes erupted between U.S. forces and militia loyal to Shi'ite Muslim cleric Moqtada al-Sadr in Baghdad and Najaf.**

The leap in activity not only points to a sharp increase in U.S. casualties, but provides an insight into the cost in life and limb to the men doing the fighting.

"It's not like anything in the movies," said Major Christopher Knapp, 40, a pilot and commander of the 45th Medical Company based at Taji, just north of Baghdad.

"There's torn flesh, blood everywhere. There's no way to be able to describe it, it's just horrific," he said on Tuesday at the base housing Black Hawk transports and Apache gunships.

At least U.S. soldiers can expect to be whisked to surgeons in Iraq, or if necessary, treated at U.S. bases in Germany. **For wounded Iraqis, medical facilities are often makeshift at best.**

As the helicopter banked toward the U.S. military hospital in Baghdad, a medic in a bulky flying helmet and visor searched the wounded soldier's wrist for a pulse. There was none.

A roadside bomb blast that morning appeared to have severed an artery, draining the life from the man's arm, swathed by his comrades in bandages stained with dried blood.

On the stretcher stacked beneath him lay an Iraqi man who had been working alongside the soldier as a translator, his knees bandaged to cover less serious shrapnel wounds.

For medics used to dealing with limbs torn off by explosions and torsos burst by gunshots, the American was in good shape.

"Compared to the other things that we've seen, that guy was outstanding," said Specialist Todd Foxworth, 34, the medic who treated him during the flight. "I've literally seen it all."

On bad days, the metal deck of the helicopter is slick with blood. There are often surprisingly few screams -- the wounded have already been doped with morphine by soldiers on the ground.

The company has evacuated more than 85 wounded so far in August -- mostly American soldiers, but the figure also includes some Iraqi security personnel and civilians.

Since they began work on Feb. 1, the unit has airlifted more than 2,120 casualties in their UH-60 choppers, featured in the film "Black Hawk Down."

Ground fire has brought down helicopters in Iraq and the 45th Medical Company has had its fill of heart-stopping near misses -- like the two surface-to-air missiles that exploded near Knapp's helicopter, so close the fuselage shuddered.

Crimson arcs of tracer bullets pierce Baghdad's night sky, while pilots have to watch out for another potential hazard.

"Pigeons are an issue for us," said Sergeant First Class Luis Arzadon, 40. "Sometimes we get them sucked into our engines which becomes a significant problem for our maintenance."

Swirling dust devils that materialize in an instant can bounce a helicopter around like a ball, while power pylons force pilots to vault and dip in a gut-wrenching rollercoaster ride.

When the Black Hawk carrying the wounded American and Iraqi landed, orderlies wheeled them away. The soldier would regain the use of his arm. Hours later, the crew were airborne again.

TROOP NEWS

U.S. Military Wounded Numbers More Than 6,000

Aug. 11 (Bloomberg)

The U.S. war on terrorism has wounded about 6,120 soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Washington Post said.

Many soldiers are treated at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., where doctors have seen 3,358 soldiers from Operation Iraqi Freedom, including 741 battle casualties. The rest have suffered from non-combat conditions ranging from heat exhaustion to road accidents, the Post said.

Philippines Withdraws Iraq Deployment Offer

August 11, 2004 (AEST)

The Philippines has abruptly scrapped its offer to send peacekeeping troops back to Iraq under a United Nations framework.

Last month it withdrew its 51-man contingent from the war-torn country.

Aunt Condemns Government For Soldiers' Death; "Get The Rest Of The Kids Out. We Should Not Be There"

11 August, 2004 BBC

Monday's killing of Private Lee Martin O'Callaghan, of 1st Battalion, Princess of Wales' Royal Regiment, brought the number of British deaths of military personnel in Iraq to 62. The oldest of four children, Pte O'Callaghan lived with his parents, Eugene and Shirley, in Walworth, south London, before joining the Army.

Eugene, 49, told The Sun newspaper: "When he joined the Army and was sent to Iraq, I was so proud.

"He had only been in Iraq for four months and was due back next Wednesday.

"I can't believe this has happened.

"It is a nightmare. "My poor wife is inconsolable.

"He was a good, good lad."

Pte O'Callaghan's aunt, Margaret Evans, 51, from Blackheath, south London, said the family was "absolutely distraught, devastated" at the death of her nephew, whom she described as "a really great kid".

"He always wanted to go into the Army.

"He had just done his military training and then he went straight to Iraq.

"My message to Tony Blair is, we should not be there.

"Why are we in Iraq? It is my personal opinion only, but my message would be, get the rest of the kids out."

What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Send to the E-mail address up top. Name, I.D., withheld on request. Replies confidential.

Major 'Critical' After Battle

8.13.04 by Jo Roberts, Kent Messenger New Media.

AN ARMY Major from Kent has been critically injured in a gun fight in Iraq.

The 1st Battalion Princess of Wales' Royal Regiment soldier, who has not been named by the Ministry of Defence, was flown back to Britain on Tuesday night on an emergency flight and taken to a hospital in Birmingham where his condition is described as serious.

The married man, whose family is believed to be based at Tidworth barracks, comes from the village of Eastry, near Canterbury, where his parents still live.

He was injured on Monday during a spate of gunfire with fighters loyal to the Muslim cleric Moqtada Sadr.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Top Muslim Body Forbids Iraq Forces To Help US Troops Or Fight For Occupation

2004-08-12 Mid East Online

BAGHDAD - Iraq's top Sunni Muslim body on Thursday warned the security forces against supporting the US military in the fight at the holy city of Najaf.

The Association of Muslim Scholars issued a fatwa, or religious edict, forbidding Muslims from offering any support to the forces of "occupation."



8.10.04 Mahdi Army resistance soldiers armed with assault rifles keep watch from a balcony in the holy city of Najaf.(AFP/Ahmad Al-Rubaye)

"It is forbidden for any Muslim to cooperate with the occupation forces and killing their own brothers and fellow citizens," it said.

"Iraqi police and members of civil defence (national guards) should fear God's punishment and wrath of the people as they battle with the occupation and participate in the shedding of their brothers' blood."

Calling the Najaf fight as an act of "genocide" by the US forces, the association said the clashes in the holy city were against both sharia Islamic law and civil laws.

"What is going in Najaf at the hands of American forces is nothing but genocide and criminal acts forbidden by sharia and civil laws as it is affecting everyone who rejects the occupation," it said.

"It is affecting the holy Muslim values and the shrines. It makes thousands of women and children leave the city."

Deputy Governor Of Basra Threatens War Against Occupation

BASRA, Aug 12 (AFP)

Basra's deputy governor for administrative affairs and a staunch supporter of radical Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr threatened to send 1,000 Iraqi police, special security and national guardsmen to help restore order in the holy city.

If the government failed to respond within a couple of hours, he pledged to take action. Some national guardsmen in Basra had even said they would not hesitate to join Sadr's militia if Maliki's offer was rejected.

Late Wednesday, Maliki warned that Basra would turn into a battlefield if the US military stormed the inner sanctum of Najaf. "Basra will become another Najaf," he said.



Iraqi Shi'ites take to the streets of the southern city of Basra to protest against ongoing conflict in Najaf August 12, 2004. Photo by Atef Hassan/Reuters

Shia Demonstrators Burn Down Nassiriya Regional HQ

12/08/2004 Norman Hermant, *Lateline*, Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

Al-Sadr supporters in Nassiriya turned their anger on the regional offices of Iraq's interim prime minister.

The local governor's demands that the crowd disperse were ignored.

The building was set alight as protesters shouted anti-government slogans.

Resistance Kills Collaborator Official

Aug 11, 2004 BAQUBA, Iraq (Reuters)

The resistance killed a local official of one of Iraq's main Shi'ite parties in a drive-by shooting south of Baghdad on Wednesday, an official of the group said.

Ali Mahmoud al-Saadi was gunned down near Mahmodiya village south of Baghdad as he was heading to his office in Baquba to the north.

Saadi was the top official for the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) in Diyala province. **SCIRI is represented in the interim government of Prime Minister Iyad Allawi.**



Mahdi Army resistance soldier takes position in the holy city of Najaf during clashes between Sadr's Mehdi Army and US-backed Iraqi forces. (AFP/Ahmad Al-Rubaye)

Resistance Kills Another Collaborator Official

Associated Press August 12, 2004

Resistance fighters killed Ali al-Khalisi, the head of the Diyala province office of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, the country's largest Shiite group, said Haitham al-Husseini, a SCIRI spokesman. Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's al-Tawhid and Jihad group claimed responsibility.

Muslim Nations Condemn Najaf Attack

Aug. 12, 2004 By SARAH EL DEEB, Associated Press

CAIRO, Egypt - Arab states and Iran called for a halt to fighting in the Iraqi holy city of Najaf on Thursday, as thousands of U.S. and Iraqi soldiers launched a major push to defeat Shiite militia holed up in the city's Imam Ali shrine and cemetery.

Egypt urged Iraqi and U.S. forces to use dialogue instead of force in Najaf. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said the world should intervene quickly to "prevent the massacre of defenseless Iraqi people."

Lebanon's most senior Muslim Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah, criticized the Iraqi government for allowing the American offensive in a city revered across the Shiite world.

"This government, which raises the banner of upholding the law, should have dealt with the matter through Iraqis," Fadlallah said in a statement, adding that the problem will not be solved by force.

In Cairo, Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa called it "a painful and sad shedding of Iraqi blood" and warned that the violation of sacred Muslim places could have "serious repercussions."

The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman said the attacks in Najaf and Kut were "inhuman" and accused the American forces of lacking ethics.

"The recent attacks reveal the face of the occupiers that is hidden behind their false claims of democracy," Asefi said.

Egypt condemned "the violence and force that will lead only to more destruction ... for the brotherly Iraqi people," according to a statement by Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit. He urged the parties to use "self-restraint and the adoption of dialogue to solve problems."

In Lebanon, the Palestinian militant group Hamas said Najaf was being subjected to a "barbaric American aggression."

"We call for the withdrawal of the occupying forces from all Iraqi territory," Hamas said in a statement faxed to The Associated Press in Cairo.

The Lebanese Shiite militant group Hezbollah urged unity among Iraqis in defending the holy shrines and asked Arab and Muslim states to help "end these ugly crimes that are being committed by occupation forces in Iraq."

In a statement, Hezbollah said the only solution is for foreign troops to withdraw from Iraq so Iraqis can decide their fate.

Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward this E-MAIL along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war, at home and in Iraq, and information about other social protest movements here in the USA. **Send requests to address up top. For copies on web site see:** <http://www.notinourname.net/gi-special/>

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

U.S. Victory In Najaf = Political Defeat

August 13, 2004 By Nicolas Rothwell, Middle East correspondent, The Australian & 12 August, 2004 By Khaled Farhan, (Reuters)

The outcome of the conflict may be inevitable, given the overwhelming firepower on the US side, but **the images that may reassure anxious US voters will inflame opinion in the broader Arab world.**

This dilemma is understood by the rebels and forms the core of their strategy: they have retreated into the holy complex because it is there the US and Iraqi government forces, in destroying the uprising, will do their own cause the greatest harm.

It is a high-stakes move, given that the heavy loss of life will be shown on television. And while US audiences will see reassuring images of helicopters in the sky, Arab viewers are receiving the raw, emotive pictures of the slaughter of the rebels.

Analysts warned of a backlash even if the shrine was undamaged and the militia beaten in Najaf. They said resentment could fester and pose long-term consequences for Allawi.

"This has the potential to be a highly destructive bout of fighting," said Gareth Stansfield, a Middle East expert at London's Royal Institute of International Affairs.



THE HOLY CITY BURNING

"It's not just the physical damage, it's the symbolism of the Americans being in Najaf as well that is damaging."

Growing anger among the majority Shi'ite community could spark a firestorm for interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi should holy sites be damaged or the death toll escalate.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Genius At Work

11 August 2004 By Ahmed Janabi, Aljazeera.Net

Corporal Major TV Johnson, spokesman for the First Marine Division in Anbar governorate in Iraq blames the attacks on police stations for the slowness in the development of an Iraqi police force, saying they make young men and women less keen to join the police.

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Mahdi militiaman mans checkpoint in Baghdad suburb of Al Sadr city August 6. (Ali Jasim/Reuters)

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