

GI SPECIAL 2#B32

LOST IN HELL: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



Spc. Jeffrey Ward, Arlington Va., U.S. Army's 1st Cavalry Division, 1st Brigade, 1-12 Cav. outside building during a cordon and search, Sadr City, Baghdad Aug. 15. (AP Photo/David P. Gilkey, Pool)

Mahdi Resistance Destroys Huge Prison In Hillah; Prisoners Free

August 15, 2004 Deutsche Presse-Agentur (dpa)

Al-Sadr loyalists attacked early Sunday the central prison in Hillah, considered Iraq's second largest after the Abu Ghraib facility near Baghdad.

Witnesses reported the prison destroyed and the 500 prisoners inside released.

Witnesses told Deutsche Presse-Agentur, dpa that al-Sadr's so-called Mahdi army had seized the local government offices, burned the Iraqi civil defence station and taken over the local police station.

The witnesses said Iraqi police had requested assistance from Polish and U.S. forces in the area. It was not immediately clear if the assistance was granted.

Militiamen were also reported to have attacked three police stations in Hillah, two of which were burned down.

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:

**Najaf Offensive Falls Apart,
Mass Desertions Of Iraqi
Troops;
*Officers At Command Hq Say
They'll Quit Too***

COMMENT: I knew things were gonna fall apart but in never imagined it would be like this. The US has two options at this point. One, a full withdrawal. Or two, take over all security again and basically cause all of Iraq to erupt. This will be the final straw I'm afraid. I just fear for all the guys still stuck over there. Michael Hoffman, Co-Founder Iraq Veterans Against The War, Veteran OIF, USMC.
<http://www.ivaw.net/>

Aug. 15, 2004 By Hannah Allam, Tom Lasseter and Dogen Hannah, Knight Ridder Newspapers

BAGHDAD, Iraq - U.S. and Iraqi forces launched a renewed assault Sunday on Shiite Muslim militiamen in the southern holy city of Najaf in a risky campaign that was marred from the onset by an outcry from Iraqi politicians and the desertion of Iraqi troops who refused to fight their countrymen.

Sunday's showdown in Najaf was troubled even before the fighting resumed. **Several officials from the Iraqi defense ministry told Knight Ridder that more than 100 Iraqi national guardsmen and a battalion of Iraqi soldiers chose to quit rather than attack fellow Iraqis in a city that includes some of the holiest sites in Shiite Islam.**

"We received a report that a whole battalion (in Najaf) threw down their rifles," said one high-ranking defense ministry official, who didn't want his name published because he's not an official spokesman. "We expected this, and we expect it again and again." (And again, and again, and again, and again. No shit. The whole fucking country hates the occupation.)

Raad Kadhemi, a spokesman for al-Sadr, said **"Only the mercenaries and the bastards are supporting the Americans and helping them ... We salute our brothers who abandoned participating in the fight against the Mahdi Army."**

Arabic-language satellite channels broadcast live all day from inside the Imam Ali shrine in Najaf, where dozens of members of al-Sadr's Mahdi Army militia chanted vows to defend the holy site. Plumes of smoke rose from just outside the shrine, and reporters heard the crackle of machine-gun fire and the deeper booms of tank and mortar rounds.

Sober-faced Iraqi colonels gathered inside the defense ministry command center, their cell phones ringing with continuous updates from the battlefield. American military advisers wandered in and out of the room, located at the end of a marble hallway in the massive, heavily guarded palace that serves as headquarters for U.S.-led forces and American civilian administrators.

"Aziz is trapped in the ancient fortress with two wounded men and two of his vehicles surrounded!" shouted one Iraqi officer.

The officers, most of them decorated veterans from the former regime, shook their heads at the thought of Iraqis battling Iraqis on sacred soil. **Several said they would resign immediately if senior officers ordered them to serve in Najaf. They asked to withhold their names for fear of reprimand.**

"I'm ready to fight for my country's independence and for my country's stability," one lieutenant colonel said. "But I won't fight my own people."

"No way," added another officer, who said his brother - a colonel - quit the same day he received orders to serve in the field. "These are my people. Why should I fight someone just because he has a difference in opinion about the future of the country?"

Halfway through the interview, two mortars landed outside his office with deafening thuds that rattled windows throughout the building.

At an Iraqi national guard base near the border of Sadr City, the vast Baghdad slum that serves as al-Sadr's support base and recruiting ground, 1st Sgt. Khalid Ali described the death threats he and other Iraqi troops have received from the Mahdi Army.

But when Ali was asked about the number of guardsmen who have quit since al-Sadr's latest uprising, U.S. Army 1st Lt. Vernon Sparkmon cut him off.

"Certain things, you can't discuss," Sparkmon told Ali. "If somebody asks that question, that's, like, classified stuff."

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/>

Command Chaos: Major U.S. Attack On Najaf Cancelled By A Last Minute Post-It Note; Iraqi Troops To Take Lead In Fighting Sadr's Forces (!)

(THANKS TO B WHO E-MAILED THIS IN: B WRITES: "oh yeah, this'll help")

Aug. 14 By Karl Vick and Rajiv Chandrasekaran, Washington Post

NAJAF, Iraq: Prime Minister Ayad Allawi will send Iraqi troops to Najaf to battle a Shiite Muslim militia.

Scores of tanks, armored troop carriers and Humvees lined up inside the gate of the main U.S. military base in Najaf, apparently preparing for significant combat operations just hours after a two-day truce had been called off. They then turned around and went back into camp.

A U.S. commander spread the word that missions were being scrubbed, conveying a message written on a Post-it note that the prime minister was angry and was "sending Iraqi Army to settle the problem."

The decision to push the U.S. military to the background in Najaf, regarded as the holiest city in the country, underscored the pitfalls Iraqi officials face in using U.S. forces to battle insurgents who still view the country as occupied.

The deployment of the Iraqi army "will help increase the distance" between Iraqi and U.S. forces, Sabah Kadhim, a spokesman for the Interior Ministry said. U.S. Army and Marine units in the Najaf area would reinforce Iraqi army operations.

Kadhim said "Quite frankly, we don't have adequate police and national guard forces to deal with" the Mahdi Army, he said. "And we don't want the [U.S. forces] to go in" to the shrine.

Army Lt. Col. Myles Miyamasu, commander of the 1st Battalion, 5th Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, which reinforced a Marine battalion after intense fighting broke out Aug. 5 said **"It'll be interesting to see what the Iraqi forces can do."**

Soldier Killed By Baghdad IED

15/08/2004 BAGHDAD, Iraq, Aug 15, SPA

A U.S. soldier was killed early Sunday when an improvised bomb exploded in northern Baghdad, the military announced. The blast went off about 1:30 a.m.

No other soldiers were wounded.

Dutch MP Dead, Five Wounded

Aug. 15, 2004 (AP) & Aljazeera.net

A 29-year-old Dutch military policeman was shot dead and five others seriously wounded during violence Saturday in Rumaythah in the southern al-Muthana province, the Dutch Defense Ministry said Sunday.

It said a Dutch army vehicle near al-Rumaythah close to the Dutch base in Samawa had come under attack.

In a separate incident in Rumaythah, al-Sadr militants fought with police in a battle that killed two people, including one policeman, said Dr. Mohammed al-Kharasani, a hospital official.

Ukraine Captain Killed

August 15, 2004 The Associated Press

THE commander of a Ukrainian platoon in Iraq was killed by a remote-controlled landmine blast while collecting water this morning, the Defence Ministry said.

Capt Yuriy Ivanov, the commander of a logistical support platoon, was getting water from a source near Suwayrah, 40km south of Baghdad, when he was killed by the explosion, ministry spokesman Viktor Vlasyuk said.

Mr Vlasyuk said local Iraqis had known that Ukrainian forces in the area often collected water at the source and apparently set a trap. Nobody else was hurt in the blast, Mr Vlasyuk said.

Ukraine has about 1600 troops in Iraq. Eight of its troops have died in Iraq, three of them in combat, and some 20 have been wounded.

Many Ukrainians favour the withdrawal of the country's troops from Iraq.

Mahdi Soldiers Earn U.S. Sergeants' Respect

"You have to give them credit," Sgt. 1st Class Mike Dewilde said after a recent firefight. "They do an amazing amount with what little they have."

Aug. 14, 2004 MARIAM FAM, Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq - While no match for the U.S. military, the Mahdi Army militia loyal to rebel Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr has bedeviled coalition troops across Iraq for weeks at a time, its young fighters driven by religious zeal, desperation and an apparent readiness to die.

Their uprising also has soured relations between coalition forces and some of Iraq's Shiites, once grateful for a U.S.-led war that freed them from Saddam Hussein's clutches.

"We have the belief; they have the power," said one fighter known by the nom de guerre Abu Ghadhib. "I think the belief is stronger than the power."

Abu Ghadhib, who fought U.S. Marines in Najaf, and his comrades have little else. Many members of the militia, created by al-Sadr last year, are poor and unemployed, casting themselves as freedom fighters and defenders of their religion and country.

In tribal-minded Iraq, some fight the Americans to settle scores. **The Americans make more enemies every time they kill militiamen, prompting surviving relatives to join the fight, Cole said.**

Ayad Ali, a militiaman in Baghdad's Sadr City slum, claimed his brother was run over by a U.S. tank.

"I would fight the Americans until the last drop of my blood," he said, echoing a sermon al-Sadr has delivered in a funeral shroud, symbolizing his readiness to die in battle.

Said Juan Cole, a University of Michigan expert on Iraqi Shiites, "**The Americans will win militarily, But I think they are losing politically,**", arguing that by pursuing al-Sadr, the Americans "made him a symbol of national resistance."

In Najaf's vast cemetery, militiamen lurk behind tombstones with Kalashnikov rifles, rocket-propelled grenades and mortars.

"You have to give them credit," Sgt. 1st Class Mike Dewilde said after a recent firefight. "They do an amazing amount with what little they have."

Abu Ghadhib, who returned from London to fight the Americans, said the militiamen have an advantage over U.S. forces, who do not want to die.

"As for us, if we live, we have to live as free people, and if we die, we go to heaven," he said. "We win either way."



10,000 More Arrive In Najaf To Defend Sadr

Aug. 15, 2004 (AP) NAJAF:& By Dean Yates, BAGHDAD (Reuters) & Aug. 14 By Karl Vick and Rajiv Chandrasekaran, Washington Post & 8.13 TODD PITMAN, Associated Press Writer

Explosions and gunfire rattled through the city of Najaf as U.S. troops in armored vehicles and tanks rolled back into the streets here Sunday, a day after the collapse of talks.

Numerous blasts hit militia positions near the city's holy sites, but it was not immediately clear if U.S. and Iraqi forces had begun an all-out offensive against Mehdi Army loyal to radical Shi'ite Muslim cleric Moqtada al-Sadr.

Much of the renewed violence Sunday afternoon appeared to come from the city's vast cemetery, where Shiite militants have been hiding out and fighting running gunbattles with U.S. forces amid the tombs since the violence broke out here Aug. 5.

On Saturday, about 10,000 demonstrators from as far away as Baghdad arrived here to show their solidarity with the militants and act as human shields to protect the city and the holy Imam Ali shrine, where the militants have taken refuge since the fighting started.

"The occupation has to go out of Iraq," Sadr said on al-Jazeera, the Arabic satellite television network. "Iraq is ours. The wealth is ours. The land is ours. The Iraqis can govern Iraq. There will be no civil war, as the U.S. says."

"They tricked people by these negotiations because they saw people angry, and they wanted to calm them down," said Ahmed Shaibani, a Sadr spokesman. **"We are positioned to defend ourselves, not to attack. We have our followers of Mahdi Army around the shrine of Ali to protect it. We will defend the city."**

In Fallujah, the heart of the Sunni insurgency, about 3,000 people demonstrated in support of al-Sadr, chanting **"Fallujah is with Najaf, the target is America."**

Mahdi Army Reinforcements Reach Najaf



After marching from other cities to Najaf August 13, 2004. (Ali Abu Shish/Reuters)

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

TROOP NEWS

A Silly In Command: Marine Col. Thinks He Can Give Orders To Falluja

8/14/2004 By Pamela Hess, Pentagon correspondent FALLUJAH, Iraq, Aug. 14 (UPI)

(NOTE: This bizarre writing is clearly by somebody for whom English is not the first language. Therefore, either "Pamela Hess, Pentagon correspondent" doesn't know the English language well, or somebody else wrote it. *Check the phrases in italics.*

(Reading between the lines, however, it appears that the resistance still runs the city, and wiped out a whole lot of puppet troops, capturing all their arms and equipment recently, and getting rid of the chief U.S. stooge in town.

(It also must be taken into consideration that the words ascribed to Col. Toolen, which portray him as a dimwitted egomaniac totally out of touch with reality, and possessing only a genius for completely disastrous command decisions, may be the fault of whoever wrote this absurd piece of shit.)

1st Marine Division plans to dissolve the controversial "Fallujah Brigade" and the Iraqi police department in that turbulent city next week, clearing the way for a future decisive battle if the Iraqi government orders it. **(Dream on.)**

The move came six days after a series of kidnappings and the murder of a respected Iraqi National Guard battalion commander, Lt. Col. Sulaiman Hamad Ftikan. **(Who, it turns out, was spying for the Occupation. So much for "respected.")**

Col. John Toolan, commander of the 1st Marine regimental Combat Team gave the commanders -- both of whom are replacing leaders kidnapped on Monday -- a deadline of Aug. 21 to muster their ING soldiers at bases outside the city, and reform their battalions. Many soldiers fled their posts after the kidnapping.

Toolan suggested the ING soldiers who want to remain on the force prepare for a serious fight and move their families out of town so as not to be victimized by insurgents.

Officials close to the plan said the ING will likely be given housing on bases. They risk being killed by the mujahideen if they return to their homes in the city.

Like the police, ING soldiers who fail to report with their weapons and ID will be put on a blacklist. Soldiers not wishing to rejoin the ING, *but who turn in their weapons and*

uniforms they will be suspended without pay. Many soldiers will have lost their weapons and uniforms when they fled their barracks Aug. 9. If they rejoin their colleagues, they will have to be completely refit. It will be the third time this occurs.

More than half of the national guard deserted during the April fight and a sizeable number joined the other side, taking their weapons with them.

Sulaiman was kidnapped Aug. 9 in an elaborate plot that implicates religious and city leaders.

Insurgents also overran and looted his headquarters on the western edge of the city. A second battalion commander was also kidnapped from another location *and his office overtaken.*

The fate of the second officer is unknown. Sulaiman was killed **and his body beaten beyond recognition**, according to intelligence reports. **(So how was the body recognized?)** Fallujah officials claim he died of a heart attack. His body was dumped in front *a youth sport ministry* where he set up his first headquarters in January.

At least one more Fallujah ING officer was also kidnapped -- Sulaiman's intelligence officer, a man named Capt. Ali.

The dissolution of the Fallujah Brigade and the police next week will put up to 5,000 armed men in Fallujah off the government payroll and out of work. Most are believed to be supporting or participating in the mujahideen that grips the city. (Fucking brilliant. Just like Bremer did with the Iraqi army.)

Fallujah, with an estimated population of 300,000, is considered by the military to be both the physical and psychological center of the resistance.

If ordered into the city, the Marines would be able to complete the major battle they feel they left unfinished last spring. (Oh right, everybody's real eager to go back to the pointless, useless, totally unsuccessful building by building urban warfare that ground them up last time they tried. Who turns out this bullshit?)

The White House forced a halt to the siege of the city in late April under pressure from the Iraqi Governing Council, which warned it was only inflaming the insurgency.

No U.S. forces have been in the city since May.

The breaking point for the Marines in Fallujah came on Aug. 9. Insurgents forced Capt. Ali and another ING officer of a road at gunpoint.

"It was a huge set up," *a Marine official* close to Sulaiman said.

Sulaiman had been under a consistent threat from the insurgency for the last month: flyers had been distributed around Fallujah calling for his murder. Three weeks ago his bodyguard's car and house were blown up; the bodyguard was later kidnapped. **"Sulaiman was nervous for a while but he got over it," the official said.**

Regimental Combat Team 1 pinned great hope on Sulaiman. *He was one of the rare ING offices* that stood and fought insurgents when they attacked his headquarters on Feb. 14.

The same day Ali was kidnapped Sulaiman gathered members of his tribe to discuss the way forward, according to accounts RCT-1 has pieced together. At the same time he was trying without success to contact Abdullah Junabi, a sheik and imam and the mufti of Fallujah. He is one of the two most powerful figures in the city and is believed to have sway over and possibly command much of the insurgent activity.

Someone passed word to Sulaiman that Ali was being held at a mosque in the city. He moved with his tribe members to the area and surrounded the building. The imam came out and a fight ensued, according to local reports. Sulaiman and his tribe members left, only to be ambushed on their way back to his headquarters. Three of his bodyguards were killed but they fought through the ambush.

When he arrived back at his headquarters he observed that insurgents armed with rocket-propelled grenades and machine guns had taken up positions around his building; there was clearly going to be a fight.

A while later a group of imams approached his headquarters. They said they could arrange for Sulaiman's safe passage home, past the insurgents, but said if his men remained at the headquarters there was going to be a battle. They agreed that one officer and 12 men would stay behind to keep watch.

Sulaiman left with the imams and he was not seen again until Aug. 11, when his body was dumped downtown.

The 13 ING soldiers were quickly overwhelmed by the insurgents. Across town a similar battle ensued at the 505th headquarters. The battalion commander, Lt. Col. Jubair, was also kidnapped. He is reported to have been publicly beaten and urinated on but his whereabouts are unknown.

At the same time, the Fallujah Brigade called to say they had taken over the battalion headquarters to secure them. **Sulaiman's headquarters had been looted of everything, including a fleet of ING trucks and cars, 10 rocket-propelled grenades, 300 new AK-47s, machine guns, hundreds of thousands of rounds of ammunition, computers, radios and furniture.**

The Marines are told Sulaiman was brought for judgment before the High Council, a group of imam's and sheiks that formed itself last month and had apparently supplanted the city council and the mayor. **There is rumored to be a videotaped confession of Sulaiman admitting to collaborating and spying for the coalition, among other crimes.**

On Saturday, Sulaiman's and Jubair's replacements showed up at the Marine outpost on the eastern edge of the city wearing their civilian clothes. **There is an order in town that any ING soldiers who wear their uniforms will be killed.**

Significantly, a commander of the Iraqi Special Forces -- in uniform -- sat on the U.S. side of the table. **The Iraqi Special Forces were trained under Saddam. About 500**

of them are now working with the 1st Marine Division and they are the foundation upon which they hope to build the new Iraqi security forces.

They listened patiently as the details of the reorganization and disbanding plan were translated into Arabic, and one had a question of his own.

"Why don't you gather the sheiks and the mayor and the city council to negotiate?" Toolan shook his head. No.

"I've been here for six months. I've been in several fights in Fallujah. *Every time I've had to negotiate with those people.* I can't trust them. They are not honest people. They have made promises and they've never come through. Insurgents have taken control of the city. I am not going to negotiate with them," Toolan said.

"*This is to prevent the blood of both sides. There are interested in peaceful negotiations,*" the new 505th battalion commander countered.

"There is no more negotiation. I am preparing too execute whatever mission the Iraqi government gives me. My plan is to do this alongside Iraqi soldiers or maybe even following behind them," Toolan said.

"We fight right now to prevent losing Iraq, or else we'll be paying the price for years to come," Toolan said. "If we try to emulate the qualities of Lt. Col. Sulaiman then I don't believe these insurgents will have a chance," he said. (One of Sulaiman's current "qualities" is being dead, along with losing his headquarters and all his troops and equipment to the resistance. So, Toolan has that part of the "emulation" right, if he's actually dimwitted enough to try to take the city. Except it's his troops who will pay the price if he decides to fuck with Fallujah.)

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.

Back From Iraq, And Out In The Cold: Reservists Say War Costs Them Jobs & Benefits

8.15.04 By LARRY MARGASAK, Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON - Increasing numbers of National Guard and Reserve troops who have returned from war in Iraq and Afghanistan are encountering new battles with their civilian employers at home. Jobs were eliminated, benefits reduced and promotions forgotten.

Since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the Labor Department reports receiving greater numbers of complaints under a 1994 law designed to give Guard and Reserve troops their old jobs back, or provide them with equivalent positions. **Benefits and raises must be protected, as if the serviceman or servicewoman had never left.**

Some soldiers, however, are finding the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act can't protect them.

_Jerry Chambers, of Oberlin, Kan., discovered budget cuts had eliminated his job as a substance abuse prevention consultant.

_Ron Vander Wal, of Pollock, S.D., was originally told his job as a customer service representative was eliminated. He was hired after filing a civil lawsuit seeking damages.

The department was receiving about 900 formal complaints a year before Sept. 11, 2001. The statistical picture since then, based on fiscal years ending Sept. 30:

_1,218 cases opened in 2002.

_1,327 cases in 2003.

_1,200 cases from Oct. 1, 2003 through July 31. If projected over 12 months, the figure would be 1,440, the department said.

While some troops fault former employers for firing them as they served their country, most complaints involved alleged denial of benefits, promotions and raises, said officials from the Labor Department and a Pentagon organization — Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve.

While the 1994 law strengthened previous protections, it doesn't help doctors, lawyers or small business owners who depend on maintaining a client base. **It doesn't save jobs eliminated by plant closings or budget cuts. And it doesn't help injured troops who can no longer perform the work they once did.**

Reservists and guardsmen who returned to the Prince George's County government outside Washington, D.C., were among those who fell into a gray area.

The county required that they exhaust their leave before receiving a county salary supplement that bridged the gap between military and civilian pay. **This meant some employees had to count some of their time in a war zone as vacation days or forfeit the extra pay.**

Chairborne Asshole Thinks Ground Fire “Routine”

August 16, 2004 By Vince Crawley, Army Times staff writer

Transport aircraft are taking ground fire daily in Iraq, and Army soldiers aboard Navy cargo vessels have thwarted apparent attacks on U.S. shipping, according to the general in charge of global U.S. military movement.

“As we fly around, we *routinely* are shot at” in Iraq, Air Force Gen. John Handy, chief of the U.S. Transportation Command said. (“We?” Unfortunately, it seems unlikely that the General gets to experience anything more menacing as a “routine” matter than the risk of stabbing himself with a fork in the Pentagon dining area.)

Iraq accounts for the vast majority of attacks, Afghanistan roughly 5 percent. Those countries are the only two where U.S. aircraft come under fire, he said.

Really Bad Plan

Army Times 8.16.04

Unhappy with serving in the military, a 19-year-old German soldier hid under a railroad bridge, taped his legs and wrists and called police to say he had been kidnapped. Two hours later, when police found him, the teenager’s tale began to unravel and he admitted to Cologne authorities he was just trying to get out of the barracks, according to the news Web site Ananova.

The soldier said he believed the military would release him from service so he could go home if he faked the abduction. **He might get out of the barracks, but going home may not be in his immediate future, because he faces criminal charges for filing a false report and might have to repay police and firefighters for rescue costs and pay the railroad for having trains stopped for several hours during the investigation into the fake kidnapping.**

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Oil Workers Strike Against Occupation

August 14 Arab Media Watch

Workers at an oil-pumping station in Nasiriya stopped operations in protest against the government’s backing of the US offensive.

“We stopped pumping in protest of the inhuman conduct of the interim government and its cooperation with the occupation forces to ransack the holy

city of Najaf and insult the Shia, their symbols and holy places," a statement by the oil workers said.

MORE:

Uprising Halves Oil Exports; In-Country Supplies Running Out

August 14, 15, 2004 By Khaled Yacoub Oweis BAGHDAD (Reuters)

Iraq's oil exports were still running at half their normal rate Sunday as instability due to an anti-U.S. uprising prevented the re-opening of a main pipeline feeding the country's terminals in the Gulf.

For nearly a week, the unrest has kept Iraq from hitting its August export goal of 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd).

An Iraqi oil official said it was impossible to say how long the threat from the rising would cripple oil sales, the country's key revenue earner.

``The situation in Basra is bad. Management ordered the pipeline shut late yesterday," said the South Oil Company official, who declined to be named.

``Very few people showed up to work again today. The feeling is it is not wise to challenge Sadr's followers."

``The situation is very fluid and fragile -- we can't anticipate anything," the official told Reuters. ``What is correct now is that we are loading about 900,000 barrels of Basra Light. **How long we can sustain that -- only God knows."**

Exports from Iraq's offshore terminals, which account for all its oil sales, have run at half normal levels of 1.8 million bpd since last Monday when saboteurs attacked a 48-inch pipeline that links southern oilfields to two offshore terminals.

A 42-inch pipeline remains in operation.

One tanker, the Lucky Sailor, was loading some 888,000 barrels per day (bpd) of Basra Light crude from platform number four of the Basra Oil Terminal (BOT), formerly known as Mina al-Bakr, a shipping agent said.

Two ships were waiting to load at BOT and two tankers were ready to lift barrels from the neighboring Khor al-Amaya port.

Iraq's northern export route -- linking the giant Kirkuk oilfield with the Turkish port of Ceyhan -- has been shut for several months after a spate of sabotage attacks.

Sabotage also has hit Iraq's domestic oil network over the past week, disrupting refinery operations and helping to create shortages of gasoline and other refined products in Baghdad. (Additional reporting by Peg Mackey, Dubai)

Red Line!

12 August 2004 By Didier François, Libération

At the foot of the Al-Samarai Mosque, Mohamed Jassem, 24 years old, maintains a perky little bar that serves fresh fruit juices only. He urges his customers to swallow their last glass so he can close up. "In solidarity with the Sadr City and Najaf fighters" he asserts, **"because we all support everyone who resists Iraq's occupation."**

Like most of the young people in the neighborhood, Mohamed has just changed allegiance. Up until now, his only hero was the old Ayatollah Ali Sistani. However, the Iraqi Shi'ites' highest moral authority has chosen to leave for treatment in London while American troops launch an assault on Najaf's holy sites.

"But he's the one who said at the beginning of this year that that was a red line the occupier must never cross. Of course, we're simple people; we can't judge the decisions of such a great scholar of Islamic sciences. But his silence leaves us puzzled.

"Moqtada is perhaps not so great a scholar as Sistani, but he's risking death to defend Imam Ali's mausoleum. *I think that if the Americans touch one hair on his head, all the Shi'ites in Iraq will go to the streets.*"

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Najaf: Why Bush Rolled The Dice (And Lost)

(Finally, an explanation of why the Bush Regime ordered the insane attack on Najaf: soldiers are dying for his re-election campaign!)

Aug 12, 2004 Michael Schwartz,
<http://progressivetrail.org/articles/040811Schwartz.shtml>

The immediate goals of the ongoing battle were summarized by Alex Berenson and John F. Burns in the New York Times, in response to an offer of a cease fire by the Sadrists.

Reporters Tavernese and Burns characterized the more general goals of the offensive in this way:

This major offensive was probably motivated by the increasing possibility that the U.S. and its allies were losing all control over most of the major cities in Iraq. In the Sunni parts of the country, city after city has in fact adopted the "Falluja model" -- refusing to allow an American presence in its streets and establishing its own local government.

As a recent Tomdispatch succinctly summarized the situation: "Think of Sunni Iraq -- and possibly parts of Shia Iraq as well -- as a 'nation' of city-state fiefdoms, each threatening to blink off [the U.S.] map of 'sovereignty,' despite our 140,000 troops and our huge bases in the country."

The attack in Najaf is certainly an attempt to stem this tide before it engulfs the Shia areas of Iraq as well, and it validates historian Juan Cole's ironic description of Prime Minister Allawi as "really... just the mayor of downtown Baghdad."

The U.S. and its Iraqi clients probably chose Najaf because it represented their best chance of immediate success. Unlike the mujaheddin in Falluja (and other Sunni cities), the al-Mahdi soldiers were generally not members of Saddam's army and are therefore more lightly armed and considerably less undisciplined as fighters; nor do they enjoy the unconditional support of the local population.

A quick victory would therefore be a noteworthy achievement and might have some chance of convincing rebels in other Shia cities not to follow the Falluja model -- at least not immediately. (Kiss that faint hope goodbye.)

However, a loss in Najaf, which could occur even with a military "victory," would be catastrophic for the U.S. and for its interim administration in Baghdad, which is now indelibly identified with the Najaf offensive and has ostensibly "ordered" it.

Even a victory would, at least in the long run, undermine the already strained tolerance of the country's deeply suspicious Shia population.

The Americans inside the Green Zone in Baghdad, and assumedly in Washington, are, however, banking on the possibility that an immediate victory might be worth the negative publicity. It might establish the interim administration and its American muscle as a formidable, if brutal, adversary, worthy of fear if not respect. **A defeat, on the other hand, would make it nothing more than an impotent adjunct of the American occupation.**

For the Bush administration, the battle of Najaf shapes up as a new Falluja: If it doesn't win quickly, it will likely be a major disaster.

A quick victory might indeed make it look, for a time, as if the occupation, now in new clothes, had turned some corner, particularly if it resulted in temporary quiescence throughout the Shia south. **But a long and brutal fight, or even an inconclusive victory which led to further fighting elsewhere in Shia Iraq or renewed low-level fighting in Najaf, would almost certainly trigger yet more problems not just in Iraq**

but throughout the Middle East. And this would lead in turn to another round of worldwide outrage, and so to yet another electoral problem at home.

A loss after a long bloody battle would yield all of the above, while reducing the American military to the use of air power against cities, without any real hope of pacifying them.

Our presidential election could be decided by this battle.

President Bush's approval ratings dropped 10% during the April and May battles, creating the opening for a Kerry victory. Since then they have neither recovered, nor deteriorated further. If the battle for Najaf dominates the headlines for as long as a week, it will likely be the next big event in the Presidential campaign.

A resounding victory for American forces could be exactly what Karl Rove has been dreaming of -- proof that the tide has turned in Iraq. At the very least, it might remove the subject from the front pages of American papers and drop it down the nightly network prime-time news for a suitable period of time.

But a defeat as ignominious as Falluja -- or even a bloody and destructive victory bought at the expense of worldwide outrage -- would almost certainly drive away many remaining swing voters, and might weaken the resolve of small numbers of Republican voters as well. This would leave Bush where his father was going into the electoral stretch drive --in too deep a deficit for any campaign rhetoric to overcome.

One has to wonder why the Bush Administration has selected such a risky strategy, fraught with possibly disastrous consequences. The only explanation that makes sense is that they are desperate. In Iraq, their control is slipping away one city at a time, a process that actually accelerated after the "transfer of sovereignty." A dramatic military offensive may be the only way they can imagine -- especially since their thinking is so militarily oriented -- to reverse this decline.

The agony of the current American offensive begins with the death and destruction it is wreaking on an ancient and holy city. Beyond that, the primary damage, may lie in the less visible horror that animates this new military strategy. **The U.S. is no longer capable either of winning the "battle for the hearts and minds" of the Iraqis or governing most of the country.**

Shia Backlash Wrecks US Strategy

15 Aug 2004 TIM RIPLEY, Scotsman.com & August 14, 2004 By Doug Struck, The Washington Post

WHEN troopers of the US 101st Airborne Division first entered the Iraqi city of Najaf 17 months ago, they were greeted by huge and welcoming crowds chanting "Die Saddam, die".

This weekend, the same streets are littered with the debris from over a week's sustained and bloody combat. Empty shell cases and burnt-out vehicles have replaced the flowers and flags of welcome.

Few expect a lasting calm in Iraq's Shia regions any time soon.

All over southern Iraq, Shia fighters have traded fire with US, British and Italian troops for more than 10 days in the second major uprising in six months by supporters of the firebrand cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr.

Iraq's Shia population appears to be becoming increasingly radicalised by the current rebellion, making it very difficult for the US and its allies to portray it as the actions of a small, embittered minority.

Every time US marines and Iraqi troops loyal to the Baghdad regime inch forward into the heart of Najaf, it seems to boost attendance at demonstrations in the capital in support of Sadr.

This nightmare scenario is the last thing anyone imagined in April last year at the high water mark of US power in Iraq. The long-oppressed Shia were seen as America's 'Trojan Horse', proving a natural, pro-US majority in post-Saddam Iraq.

But demands for rapid political change to ensure the Shia received their rightful say in the future of Iraq and an equitable slice of its wealth began to multiply.

Despite losing hundreds of men in the failed uprising in April and many more last week, Sadr appears to have been able to replace his lost fighters.

The dilemma for the US forces attacking Najaf is that the more damage they inflict on Sadr's forces and the Iman Ali mosque, where they are taking refuge, the more likely the population of southern Iraq will swing behind the cleric and his fighters.

Heavy civilian casualties or damage to the Iman Ali mosque could create a wave of support for Sadr that could fatally destabilise the government in Baghdad.

His threats to blow up oil pipelines have closed the southern oil fields, cutting 90% of all revenue to the Baghdad government at a stroke.

Farris Taliq Qani, 40, works in Baghdad -- he is the manager of a small hotel.

Qani said he viewed Sadr as "an honest nationalist who did not want to push things this far. All he did was criticize the government and the American occupation."

"This Mahdi Army has been able to stand in the face of the biggest and strongest power in the world," Qani said. "People who really believe in this fight are ready to defend it with their lives. In the beginning, few people supported him. Now he has more than 90 percent of the people."

Najaf: Pissing Off The Shias;

How To Win A Battle And Lose A War; “Fatal Strains” In Fake “Government”

12 August 2004 By Jim Lobe, Inter Press Service

Shiites "worldwide are shocked and outraged over what is going on in Najaf", Imam Moustafa Al-Qazwini, a prominent Shiite leader based in California, told the 'Los Angeles Times' on Thursday. "They consider it an assault on the sanctity of Islam and in particular Shia Islam".

"Any attack on that city will destroy America's future in Iraq completely", said al-Qazwini, who supported the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 but became disillusioned with the occupation after several months of traveling to the occupied nation earlier this year.

To Juan Cole, an Iraq expert at the University of Michigan, the fighting of the past week marks a major setback for Washington's larger political goals.

"The credibility of the Allawi government as an independent Iraqi government has been decisively undermined by this", Cole said adding that while much of the Iraqi public was willing to give the interim leader a chance, "he will now be seen as nothing more than an American puppet or, worse, an American agent".

The Marines' actions have created serious and potentially fatal strains even within the government. Its Shia vice president, Ibrahim Jaafari, who is also leader of the Dawa Party and generally regarded as Iraq's most popular political figure, on Wednesday denounced the presence of U.S. forces in Najaf, while the deputy governor of Najaf province resigned to protest "all the U.S. terrorist operations that they are doing against this holy city".

"What's going on right now looks a lot like April 1991, when it was (Iraqi President) Saddam (Hussein) who was crushing a Shiite uprising. But now it's the Marines who are playing the role of the Republican Guard", Cole told IPS, adding that U.S. policy in Iraq was looking increasingly like "Ba'ath-lite", particularly under Allawi.

"The greatest vulnerability we have is to turn the mass of the (Shiite) population against the coalition", retired Army Gen Daniel Christman told 'USA Today'. "We can win every tactical battle but lose the war if we don't put the individual engagements inside a larger political context".

But that appears to be precisely what is taking place.

"People say the south has been quieter (than the Sunni area), but I think that's over now," said Cole.

But the fighting in Najaf has much broader implications, which spell big trouble for the United States beyond Iraq, according to the experts.

"It is vital that Washington understand that it cannot consider the Shiites of Iraq to be an independent, national body", warned Youssef Ibrahim, a former 'New York Times' correspondent, in a widely noted column published in June. **"Any efforts by the Americans or the new Iraqi government to marginalize or imprison (Sadr) would cause reverberations from Iran to Lebanon to Pakistan".**

"Lebanese Hezbollah will organise, the U.S. naval base in Bahrain (where there is a large Shiite community) is likely to be a target", he said. **"I think there will be anti-U.S. terror coming out of this, and the American public will again ask, 'Why do they hate us'?"**

"It will completely discredit America and make it the new tyrant in the eyes of Shias worldwide", said Al-Qazwini.

Arab Press Warns Of Disaster

BBC August 13, 2004

UAE - Editorial in Al-Bayan

The heinous military operations in Najaf will not bear fruit. **The occupation might temporarily succeed because of the sophisticated and destructive military weapons it possesses to besiege and take control of the holy city. But it will never succeed in putting out the fire of anger...**

Egypt - Editorial in Al-Jumhuriyah

The occupation forces have violated the sanctity of the holy city of Najaf. No Muslim in the world, whether Shia or Sunni, can accept what has happened... The insistence on the language of military force will only bring about more destruction and killing.

Freedom has turned into slavery and stability into an enraged volcano.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Walk-Out At Phony Iraq "Democracy" Conference As Mortars Mark Opening

(Bush's idea of democracy: The Occupation stacked the delegates to make sure that the majority would obey the Occupation and betray their own people.)

BAGHDAD, Aug 15 (AFP) & By Dean Yates, BAGHDAD (Reuters) & Aljazeera.net

Insurgents fired mortars at a meeting where Iraqi leaders met to pick an interim national assembly Sunday, killing at least two people in a grim reminder of the country's tortured path toward democracy, shaking the building where the Iraqi National Conference is under way.

Moments after the blasts, organisers of the conference on Sunday screamed at participants to get away from the windows of the convention centre.

A US soldier at the scene confirmed that "a few rounds of mortars" were fired on Haifa Street, where clashes had also broken out between US soldiers and insurgents in the street. "The firing is sporadic but quite regular," he said.

The three-day conference, with 1,300 delegates, was not affected, though some participants were startled as the explosions rattled windows.

The brazen mortar attack, despite curfews around the zone, checkpoints and blocked streets illustrates Iraq's nightmarish security.

A large group of people walked out of a national conference *billed as an experiment in Iraqi democracy* shortly after it opened, as fighting resumed in the holy city of Najaf.

More than 100 people leapt out of their seats as soon as UN special envoy to Iraq, Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, finished his opening speech, shouting "as long as there are airstrikes and shelling we can't have a conference".

Yahya Mussawi, a representative of a group known as the Shiite House, which worked to defuse a spring uprising by Shiite militia leader Moqtada Sadr, jumped on to the podium before he was forced down by chief organiser Fuad Maasum.

"Part of democracy is that you listen to the Iraqi people. It is time that you heard us and we ask that military operations stop in Najaf immediately and dialogue takes place," he shouted.

"Listen to us, prime minister, listen to us," said the protestors, as Maasum announced that there would be a 30-minute break in the proceedings.

The conference has been beset by boycotts from key players such as Sadr and the Muslim Clerics Association, an influential grouping of Sunni religious leaders.

Democracy Occupation Style:

COPS WITH RIFLES THREATEN TO ARREST ALL REPORTERS WHO WON'T LEAVE NAJAF

8.15.04 By Dean Yates, BAGHDAD (Reuters) & AP

Police in Najaf threatened to arrest journalists unless they left the city. Though the Najaf police chief said the move was for the reporters' safety, many local journalists feared the aim was to impose a news blackout in the city.

"I have an order that all journalists must leave Najaf now, anyone who does not leave will be arrested," said a police lieutenant, one of a group of several officers brandishing rifles who arrived at a hotel where reporters were staying.

Four police cars surrounded a hotel in the city where journalists were staying and presented the order signed by Najaf's police chief, Brig. Ghalib al-Jazaari.

The police said any cameras and cellular phones they saw would be confiscated.

Earlier Sunday, police had advised reporters to leave Najaf, saying there was rumor of a potential car bombing targeting journalists. When most reporters stayed, the police returned with the order to leave.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

U.S. Soldiers Fear Afghan Drug War

14 August 2004 By Nick Meo, Independent U.K.

US soldiers in Afghanistan fear they are about to be launched into a bloody war on drugs amid mounting evidence that the country's booming opium trade is funding terrorists linked to al-Qa'ida.

The US Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, raised the prospect of the 17,000 combat troops based in the country taking an active role against the drugs trade on a visit to Kabul this week when he spoke of a need for a new strategy.

Patrolling US troops routinely turn a blind eye to opium farming and trading, ignoring poppy fields, and have recruited warlords suspected of being drug dealers to fight al-Qa'ida.

Taking on Afghanistan's powerful drug lords could force US troops to confront dangerous new enemies, however.

One US soldier in Kandahar said: "We start taking out drug guys, and they will start taking out our guys." The overstretched military is thought to prefer its current brief, which explicitly excludes it from drug eradication.

Security experts in Kabul now warn foreigners not to venture into poppy farming areas as they may be attacked if farmers believe they are involved in poppy eradication.

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

Report From Rafah

6 August 2004

The Israeli Army withdrew from Yibna neighborhood in Rafah leaving 5 dead, 22 injured, and over 21 demolished buildings.

"I don't know what they want from us!" said Yasir Juda who was trying to get out his taxi cab that was demolished under the rubble of his house. "If they want us to leave here, then it is NO, because death is much easier than leaving our country."

Yassir is a pharmacist who had borrowed money from all his relatives to buy a cab and work. Now he has nothing.

Seeing children searching under the rubble of their homes for whatever they can find is heart breaking.

On the same day medical sources at Abu Youisf Al Najjar said that 12 year old Iman Barhoum had died from injuries to her head by Israeli random shelling.

The last incursion demolished all the infrastructure of Rafah, including phone lines, water supplies, electricity providers, trees and all the streets.

There were some damages at Al Mustafa mosque, in addition to four retail shops that belonged to Rushdi Abu Taha, Sabri Abu Tiour, and Samir Daban.

Rafah Crossing:

Again and again the catastrophe has no end: three pregnant women lost their babies at the crossing, and the fourth gave birth and called her baby child by a strange name which is: "Crossing Point."

Medical sources said today that Sabah Jamal, 40 years old, lost her baby due to lack of medical care at the Rafah crossing. Najah Ezzeden, 29 years old, was the same, and so was Sabah Abdelwahab, 32.

The Israeli army denied entrance permission for the body of Yusra Abdelfatah, a 52-year old who died after waiting over 19 days on her way back from an operation in one of the hospitals in Cairo.



(To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation by a foreign power, go to: www.rafahtoday.org. The foreign army is Israeli; the occupied nation is Palestine.)

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