

GI SPECIAL 2#B33

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:



U.S. Army soldiers fight in the streets of Najaf Aug. 16, 2004. (AP Photo/Jim MacMillan)



(AP Photo)

Another Valley Soldier Killed

AUGUST 16, 2004 WorldNow and KGBT

Just days after burying a Marine and learning that a Valley soldier was killed in Afghanistan, yet another soldier from the Rio Grande Valley has died overseas.

The family of Army Specialist Mark Zapata learned of his death late Sunday. Zapata, who was from Edinburg, was reportedly killed in Falluja, Iraq.

His mother says Zapata come home in July for a visit.

She says he emailed and called often. But she says his last call notified them that he would be on a mission for a month and unavailable.

THREE KILLED IN ACTION IN AN-NAJAF

August 16, 2004 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND Release Number: 04-08-18C & AP & By Karl Vick, Washington Post Foreign Service

FOB DUKE - **Three U.S. soldiers attached to the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit were killed** as a result of enemy action in the An Najaf province Aug. 15.

Two were killed Sunday in fighting in the city's vast graveyard when troops came under attack by militiamen loyal to firebrand Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, Marine Capt. Carrie Batson said.

Soldiers from the Baghdad-based 1st Cavalry Division were deployed to Najaf after fighting erupted there Aug. 5.

Marine Killed In Anbar Province

8/16/2004 BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP)

Marine Capt. Carrie Batson said a soldier attached to the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, deployed in Anbar province, was also killed Sunday. Anbar includes the volatile cities of Fallujah, Ramadi and Qaim on the Syrian border.

NO PLACE LEFT TO HIDE



Smoke billows from inside the so-called Green Zone, where over 1,000 delegates are taking part in the Iraqi national conference, **after several mortars landed in the heavily fortified area in the center of Baghdad.** (AFP/Saeed Khan)

Five Ukrainian Soldiers Wounded Near Al Suwayrah

Kiev, Aug 16, SPA

Five Ukrainians were injured in Iraq in a roadside ambush, according to a Ukraine Ministry of Defence statement.

The attack occurred near the As Suwayrah community in Wasit province, central Iraq, during a routine patrol.

Five of eight Ukrainians aboard one vehicle were hit. Two were evacuated to a U.S. hospital in Baghdad, two were treated at a Ukrainian facility and one soldier required only treatment at the scene.

Sporadic Fighting In Najaf; U.S. Officers Told To Wait For Phantom “Iraqi Army” To Arrive And Lead The Charge



Mahdi Army prepare to fire a mortar in Najaf. (Akram Saleh -- Reuters)

NAJAF, Iraq Aug. 15 – Combat resumed in Najaf on Sunday, as U.S. forces edged into the narrow streets surrounding the shrine of Imam Ali and militiamen fired mortars and rocket-propelled grenades from around the holy site that serves as their firebase.

While clashes have resumed in Najaf since the collapse of peace talks Saturday, U.S. and Iraqi forces have not launched a fresh all-out offensive.

A Marine commander said the U.S. forces were trying to keep pressure on the militia, called the Mahdi Army, while awaiting the arrival of the newly trained Iraqi troops.

"The Iraqi government has asked us to squeeze in," said Maj. David Holahan of the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

After dark, U.S. military spotters called in a series of deafening artillery barrages on the cemetery, targeting a concentration of militiamen more than a mile from the shrine, said Marine Capt. Coby Moran. At the same time, troops from the Army's 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment conducted raids in Najaf's old city, a neighborhood south of the sacred site.

During daylight, mortar fire, rocket-propelled grenades, tank rounds, machine-gun fire and the crack of sniper rifles echoed intermittently across the sun-baked downtown, largely deserted by residents ordered to evacuate the crowded neighborhoods near the gold-domed shrine.

Details of the Iraqi deployment remained uncertain. Defense Minister Hazim Shalan visited a Marine base in Najaf, but afterward senior officers said they remained uncertain how many Iraqi troops would arrive, or when.

The U.S. commander said forces supported the decision to use Iraqis in the crisis, given the unpopularity of U.S. forces and the extraordinary sensitivities surrounding the shrine.

But officers also said they were concerned that the delay would mean more casualties, and they expressed frustration with the closely circumscribed rules of engagement involving combat near the sacred site. At one point in the afternoon, troops in the cemetery north of the shrine dodged more than 15 mortar shells fired from 150 yards outside the shrine, but could not return fire.

"We're taught: You receive fire, you go forward, destroy it," said Maj. Bob Pizzitola, executive officer of the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment. "But **we understand the bigger picture. If we were to do that, we'd have a bigger fight on our hands throughout Iraq.**

"We understand we can't do it, but it's frustrating, like being the designated driver."

A decorative perimeter wall surrounding the mosque was damaged by an explosion Sunday, prompting coverage on Arabic-language satellite channels and ardent vows from volunteers to protect the site. The source of the explosion could

not be learned precisely, but around 2:30 p.m., a U.S. tank had fired a 120mm round in the general direction, targeting a house from which militiamen had fired five rocket-propelled grenades within five minutes.

War Reports: Resistance Point Of View

Iraqi Resistance Report for events of Saturday, 14 August 2004 and Sunday, 15 August 2004 Translated and/or compiled by Muhammad Abu Nasr, member editorial board The Free Arab Voice

Saturday, August 14, 2004

Faluja

Iraqi Resistance forces attacked US aggressor troops on the highway south of the industrial zone of al-Fallujah on Saturday and north of the al-'Askari neighborhood, and also battled them in the an-Nazal neighborhood on Saturday.

US forces did take losses, however, as black smoke could be seen rising over burning American military vehicles.

Al-Fallujah's Resistance fighters inflicted heavy losses on a US column coming from Baghdad and heading towards ar-Ramadi on Friday as it passed northern al-Fallujah. Seven places were visible to the correspondent of Mafkarat al-Islam from which black smoke was rising over area where the US column was struck on its way to aid US troops in ar-Ramadi.

This is the seventh US column in the last few days that the Resistance has thrown back, complicating US plans to keep Resistance fighters busy as they resupply their own forces in the area where they encircle ar-Ramadi.

An-Nasiriyah.

Fistfights between the Jaysh al-Mahdi and puppet policemen almost escalated into armed clashes on Saturday.

Umm Qasr

Resistance blows up oil pipelines in Umm Qasr port. Iraqi Resistance fighters continue to control the flow of oil out of Iraq. **According to the correspondent of Mafkarat al-Islam in al-Basrah province, the Resistance at 7:00pm Saturday fired two rockets at oil pipelines in the port of Umm Qasr on the Arabian Gulf. One oil pipeline was totally destroyed in the attack and fire continued to blaze from it after midnight Sunday morning.**

Sunday, August 15, 2004

Fallujah

Resistance throws back US ground assault on al-Fallujah Sunday afternoon.

American aggressor troops mounted an attack on al-Fallujah Sunday afternoon in an effort to break into the city, as US attacks continued, now here, now there all day. Iraqi Resistance forces held back the American offensive push in the ash-Shuhada' and al-'Askari neighborhoods, already pounded by US airraids.

The local correspondent of Mafkarat al-Islam reported in a dispatch posted at 5:00pm Sunday afternoon that the Resistance threw the attackers back, inflicting losses in men and materiel.

In ash-Shuhada' the Resistance totally destroyed two US armored vehicles, killing all aboard. In al-'Askari a third armored vehicle was set ablaze, and three soldiers, their clothes on fire leapt out, but were cut down instantly by Resistance gunfire. The number of soldier who remained inside is unknown.

The correspondent reports that probably at between three and eight US soldiers must have been killed in the three vehicles, as they usually at least have a driver and an assistant. A third soldier would be responsible for firing the heavy machine gun mounted on the vehicle. Those are the basic crew of such vehicles, the correspondent wrote.

But after the rise in Resistance intensity, US forces tended to use the armored vehicles to transport troops in a relatively secure manner, and so the number of soldiers usually found in American vehicles increased by five or as many as seven more soldiers per vehicle.

US aggressor troops have deployed snipers in al-Fallujah who are shooting at movement in the streets, preventing the transport of the bodies of the four latest martyrs which are still in the ash-Shuhada' neighborhood with a US armored vehicle nearby. American sharpshooters have closed off the area to the south so that the local residents cannot carry the bodies away for decent burial.

Seven American troops killed Sunday night east of al-Fallujah. In fierce fighting Sunday night, al-Fallujah Resistance fighters destroyed a US armored vehicle and killed seven US troops in the al-Hasbiyah ash-Sharqiyah area east of al-Fallujah, near al-Khalidiyah.

The correspondent for Mafkarat al-Islam reported that after sunset on Sunday, the Resistance ambushed an armored vehicle and two Humvees that were with it. **The two Humvees were able to flee, leaving the armored vehicle on its own.** The Resistance overpowered it and killed its crew.

American forces later came and cordoned off the area of the attack. A US Chinook helicopter hoisted the armored vehicle up and away, with the corpses of the dead Americans inside.

Eleven US troops were killed when an armored vehicle and a Humvee were burned and totally destroyed on the al-'Amiriyah Road south of al-Fallujah.

The local correspondent for Mafkarat al-Islam reported that the US suffered the losses in the course of close combat with the Resistance forces who attacked the Americans with rocket-propelled grenades. Eyewitnesses reported that the Resistance ambush was extremely successful. **The Resistance fighters apparently hid behind checkpoint**

barriers on the road along which US troops pass. They sprung on the American suddenly, giving them the impression that they were being attacked by a large force. Most of the American vehicles fled leaving an armored vehicle and a Humvee and about 11 dead American troops.

As usual, the US later dispatched aircraft that bombed the area in which the attack took place. The Resistance fighters, however, were able to get out of the target area and out of range of the aircraft before that attack.

Resistance destroys two US armored vehicles and a Humvee killing numerous US troops in ash-Shuhada' neighborhood of al-Fallujah. Iraqi Resistance fighters in the ash-Shuhada' neighborhood of al-Fallujah after sunset on Sunday destroyed two US armored vehicles and one Humvee in addition to knocking a tank out of service (though it was not destroyed).

The correspondent of Mafkarat al-Islam reported from the area that all the Americans aboard the armored vehicle were killed, but the correspondent was unable to determine precisely how many men that would be. Five US troops in the Humvee were killed.

US launches silly attempt to lure al-Fallujah residents into revolting against Iraqi Resistance leaders. US aggressor troops have made a clumsy attempt at sparking infighting among the residents of al-Fallujah. On Sunday the Americans circulated leaflets in the city saying that the leaders of al-Fallujah and their commanders were helping what they referred to as "rebels." The leaflets said that they Americans had \$65 million ready for the city, but that they would not spend any of it for the good of al-Fallujah unless the residents cooperated with the Americans and revolted against their leaders. If they failed to rebel, then the money would be spent elsewhere, the leaflets said. **The leaflets went on to give the people of al-Fallujah until 15 October to express their intentions towards the Americans.**

Baghdad

Violent fighting on Hayfa Street leaves 10 US troops dead on Sunday. The local correspondent of Mafkarat al-Islam reported in a dispatch posted at 10:30pm Mecca time Sunday night that nearly 60 US and Iraqi puppet troops fell in fierce fighting Sunday on Hayfa street in occupied Baghdad. The battles, which raged near the bridge leading to Bab al-Mu'azzam began after noon Sunday and ended just before sunset.

The fighting between the Resistance and the Americans and their stooges left seven Nissan vehicles used by the Iraqi puppet forces ablaze, and more than 50 Iraqi stooge troops dead. More than 10 Americans were killed in Sunday's fierce combat. One armored vehicle and a Humvee were set on fire.

US pressure has recently intensified on the Hayfa Street area after the imposition of a curfew there which in some locations lasts more than 20 hours each day. Hayfa Street and ah-Shaykh Ma'ruf, and the 208 and 210 districts are all under curfew.

Thirty-two US troops reported dead in heavy fighting Sunday evening in ash-Shu'lah neighborhood of Baghdad. Preliminary reports from the heavy fighting that raged Sunday in the ash-Shu'lah neighborhood of Baghdad list about 32 Americans killed in combat, which was still raging as the Mafkarat al-Islam correspondent was filing

his report at 11:00pm Sunday night. The US had thrown aircraft and tanks into the fighting.

The Mafkarat al-Islam correspondent in the area reported that the Resistance destroyed one American troop transport and two tanks on the highway around the ash-Shu'lah neighborhood.

A source in the Iraqi puppet police confirmed to Mafkarat al-Islam that the number of American dead exceeded 32 while local residents and eyewitnesses report that they saw two massive US Chinook helicopters carrying dead and wounded Americans away from the battlefield.

Resistance kills 11 US troops in ambush on Airport highway, Sunday night.

At least 11 American aggressor troops were killed when Iraqi Resistance fighters attacked their patrol north of Baghdad on Sunday. According to the local correspondent of Mafkarat al-Islam, Iraqi Resistance forces ambushed a small US patrol at 8:15pm Sunday night on the Airport Road leading to Saddam International Airport outside Baghdad. **As the patrol passed, the Resistance cut off two Humvees from the rest of the group, which preferred to retreat rather than confront the Resistance attackers.**

After cutting off the two Humvees, the Resistance attacked them with rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) setting them on fire and killing at least 11 US soldiers aboard the.



Iraqi children look at a burning American armored vehicle attacked by insurgents during in the Sadr city neighborhood, Baghdad Aug. 16. (AP Photo/Adel Mizban)

Najaf

Massive Grad rockets slam into British occupation HDQ in an-Najaf Sunday morning. Iraqi Resistance fighters fired two powerful Grad rockets at the main British occupation headquarters in the city of an-Najaf at 10:30 Sunday morning in the ash-Shu'bah neighborhood. The correspondent of Mafkarat al-Islam reported from the city that the powerful Grad rockets produced clouds of thick, black smoke from the building. The correspondent wrote that the al-Faruq Brigade, active in the area, should be probably be given credit for the attack.

Al-Basrah

Two British troops killed, two others wounded in al-Basrah Resistance attack.

The local correspondent of Mafkarat al-Islam in al-Basrah reported early Sunday afternoon that a British patrol suddenly came under Iraqi Resistance attack at about 11:00am Sunday morning in the southern Iraqi city. The Resistance attacked the British invaders in the al-Barradi'iyah neighborhood in al-Basrah province, and destroyed two Humvees. Eyewitnesses told the correspondent that two charred bodies were lying at the site of the attack British troops evacuated two other soldiers in seriously wounded condition. Fire blazed up so strongly in the vehicles making it impossible for the witnesses to tell whether there were any other corpses inside.

Mahdi Attack Gets U.S. Tank In Baghdad



An Iraqi boy watches burning U.S. Army tank in al-Sadr city August 16 (Thaier Al-Sudani/Reuters)

Aug. 16, 2004 Reuters News Service

Mehdi militia in a Shi'ite slum in Baghdad exploded a bomb under a U.S. tank and then set it on fire.

The crew escaped with minor wounds, a U.S. army spokesman said. **A U.S. helicopter gunship later strafed the street where the tank was hit. Militiamen responded with rocket-propelled grenades and assault rifles.**

Najaf Cemetery Becomes Killing Field

"You gotta give 'em credit," Sgt. 1st Class Mike Dewilde said. "They got guts."

8.13.04 By TODD PITMAN, Associated Press Writer

NAJAF, Iraq - The platoon leader's call came crackling over Charlie Company radios: "We're taking RPG fire, 800 meters! Small arms fire, 300 meters!"

With night falling, the soldiers of the 1st Cavalry Division were being attacked again by militants creeping tombstone by tombstone toward them in Najaf's sprawling cemetery, a killing field neither side has managed to secure in more than a week of sporadic fighting.

The men of the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment had been patrolling a dusty road that cuts into the graveyard's heart for eight hours to prevent militants loyal to firebrand cleric Muqtada al-Sadr from moving north.

They had discovered and blown up four bombs laid on rock-strewn paths. They'd been attacked by mortars that came close but hurt nobody.

When pockets of al-Sadr fighter's got too close, they called in Apache helicopter gunships and pressed forward with only the faintest resistance, then pulled back.

Mostly, it was quiet, and Charlie Company commander Capt. Patrick McFall spent a lot of time gazing over a computerized satellite map of the graveyard in his armored Humvee.

Near dusk, however, the crackle of gunfire and explosions rang out again.

Several Bradley fighting vehicles and half a dozen Humvees sped up to a deserted intersection on the cemetery's northeastern edge, scanning the tombstone-filled horizon with binoculars and gun turrets.

Sgt. 1st Class Mike Dewilde, leader of the 3rd Platoon, told McFall eight men with rocket-propelled grenades and "multiple snipers" had been spotted in the graveyard and buildings rising behind it near the gold-domed Imam Ali shrine.

Sgt. Lyle Pete, 24, of Gardnerville, Nev., said he'd seen three men repeatedly firing from a building near the shrine. "They jump out and fire RPGs and jump back inside," he said. "This is the second time today we've taken RPG-fire from that location," said 30-year-old McFall of Harker Heights, Texas.

With the crackle of light gunfire echoing through the graveyard, a mortar round thundered behind the men, then an RPG round exploded to their front. Smoke rose from the blasts.

A small infantry unit of about 15 men scrambled forward looking for firing positions. Some lay in the middle of a small path leading south.

A Bradley positioned in the road starting pumping thunderous rounds from its 25 mm cannon, and gunners perched on four machine-gun mounted Humvees began shooting.

A three-man team led by Dewilde ran up the steps of a mausoleum whose square, walled-in concrete roof provided ideal cover. They laid rifles across the upper edge of the wall and began shooting.

"Welcome to the Bronx," joked McFall.

The military has divided the cemetery, one of the largest in the Muslim world, into zones named after New York City boroughs.

Tense and sweating, two soldiers started to sing as they looked for targets.

"One little, two little, three little Indians!"

Dewilde cut them off. "Shut-up!"

The two laid an M-240 Bravo machine-gun along the wall and began peeling off bursts of 7.62 mm ammunition. "Hold this!" the shooter yelled, as a second soldier fed in an ammunition belt. Spent shell casings spat into the air.

After a few minutes, orders came to move ahead.

Laden in heavy body armor and helmets, the infantrymen jogged behind their huge Bradley as it pushed further into the cemetery.

Advancing slowly, they ducked behind tombs and poked flashlights mounted on their guns down crypts.

There was no way to know where the militants were.

"The problem is these guys can hide behind anything out here," said Spc. Joel Klootwyk of Knoxville, Iowa, poking a gun over a cemetery wall. "You gotta wait for them to shoot before you know where they're at."

After a 10-minute walk, the three-man group burst into a white-walled mausoleum. The entryway was empty, the glass in its arched windows shattered.

They ran cautiously up the steps and onto the rooftop, scanning the graveyard below. The lights of the Imam Ali shrine sparkled in the distance.

There was no sign of their attackers.

"The closer we get, the scarcer they get," said Dewilde, 37, of Gatesville, Texas. "When we move forward, they move back."

Overwhelming American firepower is clearly the reason. But it hasn't stopped guerrillas from sneaking up as close to the troops as possible.

When Dewilde ordered his men to head back toward the Bronx, they began poking flashlights into dark tombs again. Most had metal doors that led to small rooms.

Dewilde said his platoon had been searching crypts for four days.

"We've found cigarettes still burning, warm tea still in the cups," he said.

They've also found rockets and ammunition left behind.

As a quiet night set in, the U.S. troops climbed back onto rooftops, surveying the cemetery through the green glow of night-vision goggles.

"You gotta give 'em credit," Dewilde said. "They got guts."

The Mind Of A Mahdi Soldier: Fighting Americans Is Patriotism



Mehdi Army troops rest in a street al-Sadr city, Baghdad August 15. (Ali Jasim/Reuters)

August 15, 2004 By Saad Sarhan and Doug Struck, Washington Post Foreign Service

NAJAF, Iraq, Aug. 14 Ahmed Eisa sent his wife and two young children out of Najaf "to make sure there is someone to remember me after I die" and took up his post near the shrine of Ali, he said, with an old AK-47 rifle to shoot at U.S. soldiers.

He says he is willing to die -- he insists he wants to die -- with the Mahdi Army, a militia loyal to a young Shiite cleric, because **he is convinced that the United States intends to stay in Iraq and oppress Shiite Muslims.**

Eisa, 34, who usually works in a graphics shop designing business cards and stationery, is a soldier for the Mahdi Army. He prefers the title sniper, but in fact, his ancient Kalashnikov is not very accurate, and the bullets often jam in the mechanism. His job does not require accuracy, though.

"I am supposed to shoot at the American tanks to harass them, to draw their attention, to give my colleague some time to fire at them with an RPG" -- a rocket-propelled grenade, he said.

Eisa performed that duty five times during the recent fighting, darting from his position in the second line of Mahdi Army fighters. The first line hides behind a wall next to the cemetery, and the second line is poised in the warren of century-old brown brick houses that abuts the cemetery.

The Americans are on the other side. In between, among tombs as old as 1,300 years, are the contested killing grounds.

"I know the Americans have better weapons. They have better plans. They have uniforms that cost \$3,000, and we have only our clothes," Eisa said. **"But I have principles. I have holy land to defend. I have family to protect, so I feel stronger than them.** The occupation forces are nothing but mercenaries who fight for money, so I feel stronger."

A lean man at 5-foot-7 and 150 pounds, his pale face, glasses and uncalloused hands suggest a life spent indoors more than out. A full beard indicates his faith.

Eisa -- whose name means Jesus, considered a prophet in Islam -- explained in a lengthy telephone interview and further conversations in Najaf how he arrived at this point. For Iraq's Shiites, a sense of oppression comes legitimately. **Shiites suffered under former president Saddam Hussein, and Eisa said he counts 27 relatives who were executed during that three-decade era.**

"We don't even know where they were buried," he said.

After high school, Eisa fulfilled his compulsory military duty in the Republican Guard. He deserted three times, he said, which was not unusual for men living in the harsh conditions of the military. Each time, he returned under an amnesty.

He finished his service in 1993, then attended computer classes at a technological institute. He finished, got married and in 1998 began working in a graphics shop. **Eisa said he welcomed the fall of Hussein, but not the U.S. occupation.**

"I am old enough now to differentiate between occupation and freedom," he said. "It's not true that the Americans came to get rid of Saddam. It was only a trick to occupy the country."

"We all know that Bush announced twice that this is a crusade. So we know they are targeting a certain group," the Shiites, he said. **"We know the strategic importance of Iraq in the region and the wealth of our country. They want to control it. They want to control our oil, our wealth and the world."**

"There is something called patriotism," he added. "I like my country, and I saw the U.S. forces did not come to protect us. So I wanted to follow the leader who can demand my rights and defeat the occupation. *The U.S. forces are occupiers, so we have to resist them.*" (Exactly. This is what Bush has U.S. troops fighting over.)

Eisa fought in what he calls "the first uprising" against the Americans, fierce street fighting in Najaf between U.S. forces and insurgents in April that left hundreds of Iraqis

dead. The Iraqi government that officially took power June 28 is nothing but a puppet of the Americans, he said, and Eisa willingly answered the call to arms nine days ago when fighting broke out again.

He kissed his daughter, 3-year-old Um Albanin, and his 6-month-old son, Mohammed Ali, and sent them with his wife to the safer outskirts of Najaf. He then joined his unit, the 315th Battalion.

The worst fighting was Thursday, he said.

"I smelled the weapons, and the blood of dead people," Eisa said, recounting the pitched battle in the graveyard that resulted in scores of casualties. "I don't know how many were killed. I heard the bullets and even felt the heat of the bullets, but God protects me.

"Sometimes we had wounded people, and we couldn't evacuate them because I didn't want to leave my post. I just wanted to die for my cause. So I stayed in my place, hoping to become a martyr.

"I saw one of my colleagues try to attack a tank with his RPG. The U.S. soldier shot him in the head, about 25 meters from me. His head was destroyed. It was a terrible scene."

As the fighting stopped Saturday while negotiators tried to work out a cease-fire, Eisa mixed in a throng of thousands of supporters who came from inside and outside Najaf to show their support for the Mahdi Army. They milled about outside the shrine. When he found a colleague he had not seen since the battle, the two hugged.

Eisa has an identity card -- "Sadr's Martyr Division," it says -- but like the others in the militia, he doesn't have a uniform. He wears loose fitting black pants, a casual shirt and a green cloth around his wrist to signify closeness to Allah.

As Sadr passed the crowd, Eisa joined in chants, thrusting his fist in the air and stamping his feet. "Long live Sadr! Allawi and the government are blasphemous," he shouted, referring to Prime Minister Ayad Allawi.

The temporary lull in fighting during the negotiations boosted the spirits of the men. "This is a great victory for the Iraqis and the Mahdi Army," Eisa said. "This is evidence that we defeated the occupation forces and we are a legitimate resistance demanding the Iraqi's rights. This is victory."

But if so, it was short-lived. The negotiations faltered late in the day. Eisa and the other militiamen slipped back to their posts at the edge of the cemetery, waiting for night. Waiting for the Americans.

Comment:

The murderous incompetents who designed this war for Empire utterly ignored about 3500 years worth of Iraqi history.

Iraq always has been and still is a nation of city-states. As various times for the past thousands of years, sometimes one ruled the larger area, subduing and incorporating the others, and sometimes none were strong enough to dominate.

In either case, invading Imperial powers for thousands of years have been chewed up by city-state based resistances. They famously burnt up the invading Crusader armies by setting them on fire when they started wading through pools of black, sticky shit the Iraqis had put all over the few good roads, with ditches full of the same stuff the Crusaders had never seen before --- until they personally experienced the joy of burning petroleum, collected from the pools where it oozed out of the ground.

The strategy of today's resistance is the defeat the U.S. army in detail, since U.S. forces are widely and often thinly dispersed, rather than concentrated.

So far, it's working, and the territory completely free of U.S. occupation control is increasing at an increasing rate. Nothing is left in Ramadi but a Vietnam-type fire base on the outskirts of town. And Iraq is covered with big cities like that.

The best kept secret of the war these days is how few square miles of Iraq the U.S. has not lost to the resistance. You don't bomb cities you control.

Somebody should draw one of those war maps that would have, say, resistance in red, and uncontested areas fully under U.S. control in green.

Every soldier who dies will have been murdered by the U.S. government as surely as if an execution had been ordered. Bush & Co. are responsible for the sheer stupidity of the whole effort. They assumed that Iraqis were the only people on earth who wouldn't stand up and fight an invading army. Especially an army that kept hanging around under the command of a batch of crooked Washington politicians from both parties who thought ripping off and running things in somebody else's country was their mission in life, and fuck the Iraqis who don't like it and fuck the troops dying for their dreams of oil and Empire.

It is unnecessary. It is unforgivable. It is betrayal.

Not another day, not another dollar, not another life.

Bring Them All The Troops Home Now! T

In Najaf, Thousands Of Human Shields And Mahdi Soldiers Await U.S. Tanks

Aug. 16, 2004 By Michael Georgy, NAJAF, Iraq (Reuters) & By Karl Vick, Washington Post Foreign Service

With his militants and human shields holed up inside one of Shi'ite Islam's most sacred shrines, radical Iraqi cleric Moqtada al-Sadr is playing a shrewd waiting game before an expected American-led offensive.

Sadr's militiamen were inside the Imam Ali shrine and positioned along alleyways and on rooftops with a seemingly endless supply of AK-47 rifles and rocket-propelled grenades intermittently fired at U.S. troops in a nearby cemetery.

But it was about 2,000 impassioned Iraqi civilian "volunteers" cheering Sadr in the marble-floored courtyard of the mosque who made the biggest show of force Monday.

Traveling to Najaf from across Iraq, they are swelling the ranks of Sadr's supporters and could be another reason why U.S. troops may think twice before storming the shrine.

Ten minibuses of young men, many flying flags reading Sadr City Fedayeen, traveled from Baghdad to Najaf over the weekend, according to an aide to Ayatollah Kazim Haeri. Sadr City is a large Shiite slum in Baghdad named for Sadr's father, a grand ayatollah who was assassinated in 1999.

"These people are a deterrent to the Americans because they are civilians. They are here so that the Americans won't attack the Imam Ali shrine," said Sheikh Ahmed Shaibani, a senior Mehdi Army commander and top aide to Sadr.

Any serious damage to the shrine would enrage millions of Shi'ites around the world, including those who make up about 60 percent of Iraq's population.

The volunteers said they had no serious military training. But they seem ready to pick up an AK-47 rifle or use any means to try to block an advance by U.S. tanks positioned in neighborhoods near the shrine.

"I will lie on the ground in front of the tanks, or I will kill the Americans to defend Sadr and Najaf," said Fadil Hamed, 30, standing among a group of men who said they walked to Najaf from the southern city of Basra.

Beside a makeshift emergency clinic inside the mosque, a woman in a black veil comforted a man who lay on the marble floor with wounds to his right leg and arm.

"We will not leave the shrine until the Americans get out of Najaf. We will kill," said Ugil Abdel Hussein, 32, **a member of the Turkmen minority from the northern city of Kirkuk.**

Sadr is also looking to Iraqi tribes to advance his cause. Hundreds of tribesmen met inside the shrine and vowed their support.

One of them called on all of Iraq's tribes to hold a national conference Wednesday to end the Najaf crisis.

"All Iraqi tribesmen are invited to try and end this bloodbath in Najaf," said Sheikh Kassim Khafaji, addressing more than 100 tribesmen.

As gunfire crackled around the shrine, two large water delivery trucks suggested Sadr and his followers were digging in for the long haul.

Teenage boys with grenades strapped to their backs take cover in small alleyways beside shuttered shops.

The consequences of a raid by Iraqi security forces or Americans that seriously damages the mosque or harms Sadr are clear in the tense streets of Najaf.

"The Americans are applying military pressure on us to try and make us weak so they can get concessions. It will not happen. We are ready to fight and we are very patient," said Shaibani.



Mahdi Army soldier, Basra, Aug. 16. (AP Photo/Nabil Juranee)

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

TROOP NEWS

Civilians Collected Humvee Armor; Government Let It Sit And Rot

Aug 14, 2004 The Gainesville Sun

As a veteran who has seen combat, I'm disgusted that any military vehicles in Iraq are not "up-armored," meaning they can't stop bullets, let alone roadside bombs.

Marion County Sheriff Ed Dean got a request for bulletproof vests to line the Humvees' sides and floor panels from deputy Fred Chisholm, a reservist in Iraq serving in the 351st Military Police Company. By May 2004, Dean collected more than 850 vests and asked the military to ship them to Iraq.

It should have been easy, as in New Jersey, where a group collected and sent bulletproof vests to Iraq with hardly any delay.

Instead, more than 800 vests sat for months, and might still be sitting, in Marion County, because U.S. officials seemed more interested in downplaying the problem than solving it.

It's shameful that Washington officials failed to include armored Humvees in their \$87 billion war-spending request. It's downright immoral that officials threw political resistance at helpful civilians in Florida.

200 More Marine Reservists Gone To The Slaughterhouse

8.16.04 WXIA-TV Atlanta

One son had a hard time saying good-bye to dad today as he joined 200 other Marine reservists deploying to Iraq.

About 3 a.m., family and friends started gathering with their loved ones-in-uniform at Naval Air Station Atlanta in Dobbins Air Reserve Base.

The troop makes up the 4th Low-Altitude Air Defense Battalion embarking on their first trip to war-torn Iraq.

Capitalism In Action: Corporate Ripoff Threatens Troops Phone Cards

August 16, 2004 Army Times Editorial: Calling-card catch

The U.S. military and the Federal Communications Commission seldom move in the same circles. **But one matter under FCC review could hit military wallets like an armor-piercing bullet. At issue are the prepaid calling cards that have become a**

vital lifeline for tens of thousands of service members deployed in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere.

The FCC is reviewing a 2-year-old move by AT&T, sole supplier of prepaid phone cards to exchanges and other military-affiliated venues such as the USO, to leave certain access charges off the price of those cards.

That policy does not sit well with many local phone carriers that share in the bounty derived from the fees. But the telecommunications giant says the access charges should not apply to calls made on its phone cards because these calls typically are routed across state lines, even if both callers are in the same state.

The business merits of these arguments aside, the fact remains that adding the access charges would jack up the per-minute price of AT&T calling cards by 20 percent, according to some estimates.

Troops in the combat zones of Iraq and Afghanistan also would pay; the Pentagon gives them prepaid calling cards worth \$40 a month, but the purchasing power of those cards would erode if the FCC rules against AT&T's request.

Defense officials have contacted FCC Chairman Michael Powell to make him aware of the potential impact of such a move on troops and their families. But if Powell doesn't get that message, Congress must act.

Making soldiers the victims of telecommunications industry competition — while many are bleeding and dying in war zones — would be a terrible move.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

“You Have Been Warned” One Oil Well Set On Fire

Aug. 16 (Bloomberg) & Reuters

A single oil well in southern Iraq was set on fire by Shiite Muslim militias fighting U.S. and Iraqi forces in several cities, Reuters reported, citing an unidentified government spokesman.

The well in field near the city of Amarra was targeted yesterday and the spokesman didn't say whether the fire has been put out, Reuters said.

A domestic oil pipeline in central Iraq remained on fire on Monday, three days after saboteurs attacked it.

Drastic Benzene Shortage After One Pipeline Bombardment

8/16/2004 Arabic News.com

One Iraqi oil official said that the Benzene (**gasoline**) shortage crisis has increased in Baghdad after attackers assaulted an oil pipeline to the south of the city on Saturday and this increased the shortage in fuel.

The official who asked to be anonymous said that work is underway to maintain the line after number of queued cars increased in the benzene stations in the capital.

Iraq, which owns the second oil reserves in the world, imports oil at a cost of 50 million dollars worth of Benzene and other refined products, monthly.

The Iraqi refineries which operates at its available capacity only meet 50% to 60% of the people demand of Benzene. This, in most times led to the emergence of a parallel markets in the streets.

GRAND-DAD'S FIGHTING TOO, AND HE AIN'T THERE BECAUSE OF ANY STOP-LOSS



Mahdi Army soldiers aim towards American tanks as they take positions near Najaf's sprawling cemetery in the holy southern Iraqi city of Najaf Monday Aug. 16. (AP Photo/Khalid Mohammed)

Cops Join Anti-Occupation Demonstration

8.13.04 BAGHDAD (AFP)

Thousands of Moqtada Sadr's supporters prayed at the doorsteps of the headquarters of Iraq's caretaker government, as the cleric held out with his militia in Najaf against the US military and Iraqi forces.

Policemen waved posters of the radical cleric from the rooftop of a nearby police station as some of the men came down and joined the prayers, leaving their weapons inside, to the loud cheers of Sadr's partisans.

A black-turbaned sheikh climbed on an Iraqi police four-wheel-drive vehicle to address the crowd.

Shouted Sheikh Hazem al-Araji through a loudspeaker "We say no to a government that serves as an instrument for the occupation. We demand that criminals like the interior and defense ministers and the Najaf governor resign and face trial."

The faithful raised their fists in the air in union shouting: "No, no, America. Yes, yes, Moqtada."

At Kufa's grand mosque outside Najaf, where Sadr usually delivers his fiery Friday weekly sermons, Sheikh Jabir al-Khafaji officiated on his behalf comparing Allawi's government to that of Saddam.

"Do not kneel before the occupiers," he said. "We will not allow a Saddam-like US installed government to exist in Iraq."



Mahdi army up positions during clashes with British forces Basra Aug. 16. (AP Photo/Nabil Juranee)

Three Occuguards Injured In Baqouba

8/16/2004 BAQOUBA, Iraq (AP)

A roadside bomb killed three members of the Iraqi National Guard on Monday witnesses said.

The three guardsmen were killed when a bomb went off near their vehicle in an industrial section of Baqouba, 35 miles northeast of Baghdad, said Zuhair Abdul-Kareem, a guardsman who survived the blast.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Occupation Police Fire On Reporters In Najaf; Threaten To Kill Them All; (Giving "Deadline" A New Meaning)

<p>The policeman outside his office was brusque. "If you do not leave by the deadline we will shoot you," he said.</p>

16/08/2004 By Adrian Blomfield in Najaf, The Telegraph Group Ltd. & The Peninsula Daily & Donald Macintyre in Najaf, Independent Digital (UK) Ltd

The bullet that whistled through the lobby of the Sea Hotel in Najaf yesterday, embedding shards of glass into a foreign reporter's cheek before lodging itself in an air-conditioning unit, carried an unmistakable message: "Get out."

Journalists working in Iraq have long lived with the danger of being targeted by insurgents fighting US-led forces and their Iraqi allies.

But in Najaf the roles have been abruptly reversed. Now the Iraqi police threaten journalists, and the insurgents welcome them.

The Iraqi interim government decided yesterday to treat the media as the enemy. The authoritarian stance towards the press seems redolent of the days of Saddam Hussein.

In Najaf journalists were summoned yesterday morning by the city's police chief, Ghalab al-Jazeera. It was said that he wanted to parade some captured members of Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi army, who have launched their second uprising in four months.

Instead the police chief delivered a blunt warning: journalists had two hours to leave Najaf or face arrest. Mr Jazeera's official explanation for the decision was

that police guarding the hotel had found 550 lb of dynamite in a car nearby. That seems unlikely.

The police rarely venture out of their stations and the street outside the hotel is almost always deserted.

Mr Jazeera's expressions of concern were quickly followed by a thinly veiled attack on the foreign press.

"We know you are neutral journalists despite the fact you did not report the bad actions by Sadr's people when they beheaded and burned innocent people and the Iraqi police," he said.

For good measure, Mr Jazeera also threatened to arrest Iraqi drivers and translators working for the press corps if we did not comply. The 30-odd journalists staying at the Sea Hotel decided to stay in Najaf.

Shortly after the deadline expired, the first bullets struck the building. But the sniper was almost certainly an Iraqi policeman, given that the Mahdi army fighters were more than two miles away.

During the day two bullets were fired at the gate to the hotel entrance and through the open doorway of the hotel. The second bullet hit a glass panel inside the hotel, which slightly injured an Arab journalist when it fractured.

Then armed police raided the hotel and tried to arrest the journalists, before imposing a new two-hour deadline to leave the city.

A deputation of journalists was denied an audience with Najaf's governor, Adnan al-Zurufi.

The policeman outside his office was brusque. "If you do not leave by the deadline we will shoot you," he said.

That was enough for all but a handful of British and American journalists who hunkered down in the hotel as the deadline expired.

As night fell, shots were fired at the roof of the hotel, from where reporters file their stories.

Mohammad Kazem, an Iraqi correspondent for Iranian television, was detained at gunpoint by police in the middle of a live broadcast from a rooftop.

Sadr's fighters are more press-friendly. The cleric's aides frequently drop into the hotel to brief journalists, or take us to the shrine to meet Sadr or his spokesmen.

It was not hard to see why Iraq's interim government might prefer journalists out of the city.

On Saturday, negotiations with Mahdi army militants holed up in the Imam Ali shrine broke down and a ceasefire was called off.

The options facing the US marines and their Iraqi allies are grim. An offensive on the shrine, burial place of Imam Ali, cousin of the prophet Mohammed and inspiration for Shia Islam, is likely to push moderate Shias over to Sadr's side.

America would prefer the fledgling Iraqi security services to carry out the attack, but they are poorly equipped and trained and unlikely to succeed.

Gunfire sounded in Najaf all yesterday. By nightfall US tanks had moved to within a few hundred yards of the shrine.

The attempt to impose a news blackout in Najaf will reinforce the suspicions that a politically risky assault to storm the shrine will soon be under way.

(For more on the Occupation, see the article "Our Man In Baghdad," by Jen Roesch at www.isreview.org.)

Stupid Allawi Tells Silly Lie

Aug 12 by Chris Shumway The NewStandard

One day after Iraq's US-installed Prime Minister Iyad Allawi said US Marines were not inside the city of Najaf, those same forces launched a major offensive against several sites deep within the city, bombing civilian neighborhoods and seizing key territory near sacred Shi'ite sites.

Speaking to *ABC News* last night, Allawi said US forces were operating "outside the city." The remarks were made despite numerous television reports and newspaper photographs already available showing US Marines firing their weapons from behind tombs in the sprawling cemetery located near the Imam Ali Shrine in the heart of Najaf's Old City.

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/>

Defense Cons At Work

8.16.04 Army Times

An Army contractor charged with cleaning up an abandoned military base left unexploded shells beneath leaves and dirt instead of removing and destroying them, state and military officials said Aug. 2.

Cleanup work at Fort McClellan, Ala. was halted after the discovery.

State regulators said a July 21 inspection of a wooded area on the property uncovered 13 mortar rounds that were supposed to have been removed for disposal by **Tetra Tech FW Inc.**

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