

GI SPECIAL 2#B45

THIS IS HOW BUSH BRINGS THE TROOPS HOME



Funeral for 22-year-old U.S. Marine Juan Lopez, killed in Iraq, in his hometown of San Luis de la Paz in Mexico. He came to the U.S. as a teenager. (July 3 AP Photo/Jose Luis Magana)

“This Useless, Stupid War”

Death In Iraq Leaves A Mother To Grief, And To Rage

August 28, 2004 By KIRK SEMPLE, New York Times

NORTH CASTLE, N.Y., Aug. 25 - When Yolanda B. Cuming envisions her son's funeral, she sees flags and generals and soldiers in regalia. She wants riflemen firing a salute. She hopes for a cortege with a police escort and a ceremony with full military honors commemorating the life of a proud soldier. This is her wish for her fallen son.

Pfc. Kevin A. Cuming, 22, was killed last Saturday while on patrol in Baghdad when a rocket-propelled grenade slammed into a Humvee he was driving.

Mrs. Cuming smiled gamely, and her eyes, puffy from tears and no sleep, brightened momentarily. Her grief has become commingled with anger over a war she does not support, and she is full of indignation and blame for the president and the events that landed her son in Iraq.

"I don't think it's fair that so many mothers, fathers, siblings have to go through what I'm going through," she said. "Is it about oil? I don't know what this war is for. We don't want anyone else to die in this useless, stupid war."

Since Saturday, when two military men appeared on her doorstep with the worst possible news, she and her family had received a steady stream of visitors: relatives from around New York, and from Mexico, where Mrs. Cuming is from; neighbors; friends; the local fire chief; and the town supervisor. People brought food, flowers and cards, and ran errands for the family.

The well-wishers and mourners provided a distraction from the deepest pain, said Kevin's sister and only sibling, Christina, 20. "When everyone leaves at night, that's when it hits us," she said.

But at times it has been too much, and the family has posted notes on the door asking for privacy and has taken its telephone off the hook for stretches at a time.

Mrs. Cuming placed the son's e-mail messages and letters from Iraq on the glass-top patio table, and laid out dozens of photographs from his abbreviated life, mostly from his years in the military. In the photos, he is a good-looking young man with the dusky beauty of his mother, and he appears confident and happy - standing with his sister at her high school graduation, with his best friend from boot camp, dressed for war in the desert in Iraq.

He was an average student at Valhalla High School, a small public high school. "What comes to mind is, what a great kid," said the principal, Jerry G. Salese. "He wasn't the best student - he had a solid academic record - but what people remember was a very kind, gentle kid."

After graduation, he enrolled in SUNY-Oneonta but, his mother said, he was expelled because he missed too many classes and partied too hard. He entered Westchester Community College, where he took classes in culinary arts, but left after a year. Jobs in local restaurants and the delicatessen at the nearby Stop & Shop did not last long, either.

Mrs. Cuming picked up the phone and called a military recruiter - a fact that has filled her with guilt since the son's death. She and her husband, William A. Cuming, thought the military might give their son some discipline. Mr. Cuming served in the Vietnam War, where he won a Purple Heart; Mr. Cuming's father was in World War II.

Accepting his parents' plan, Kevin enlisted in the Army in April 2003 but never expected to go to war, his parents said. He signed up to be a cook and he was assigned to the First Cavalry Division at Fort Hood, Tex. But last April he was deployed to Kuwait and discovered that all the cooking duties had been given to outside contractors. At first he was given the responsibility for monitoring the kitchen staff in his base camp.

In Iraq, his responsibilities came to include the administration of the camp's motor pool. His phone calls and correspondence became less frequent. "I can't believe we are supposed to hand over the country back to the Iraqis in less than a month!" he wrote in an e-mail note on June 6. In a rare indication of the stress he was under, he added, "I try not to think about the attacks cause there is nothing you can do."

Mrs. Cuming, 51, who is a teacher's assistant at an elementary school in White Plains, shipped her son packages every few weeks: phone cards, chocolate-chip cookies, powdered lemonade, comic books, pictures of the family's home.

Mrs. Cuming said that her son never had a girlfriend and that she wanted him to experience that. In their phone calls, she would tell him of candidates she had spotted while walking through New York. But she avoided watching television news or reading the newspaper for fear of what she would learn. "I feared for my son's life always," she said.

She said she had never supported the war in Iraq.

"I am very against the war," she said sternly. "I don't think we should be there." It is one of the reasons she is opening her home to visitors and speaking out, she said. She plans to write a letter to President Bush.

The family received the news of his death on Saturday morning. Mrs. Cuming was packing to go to Cancun, Mexico, when the doorbell rang and she spotted a car out front that she did not recognize. Then she saw the two military men at the door.

"All of a sudden I had the horrible feeling in my stomach," she recalled. "They said, 'Ma'am, we're from the United States Army.' I said, 'This is a mistake.' They said, 'No, ma'am, this is not a mistake.' "

"I cried and screamed, I cried and screamed," she continued, head down, as she absently fingered a photograph in front of her. "You feel anger, you feel hate, you feel sorrow, you feel numb. Every feeling goes through your head and heart."

Private Cuming's death devastated a family that was already battling a chronic illness. Mr. Cuming, 61, a warehouse manager at a home for foster children in Dobbs Ferry, has lung cancer.

"I thought I was going to bury my husband first, but now I'm burying my son," Mrs. Cuming said, forcing back a wave of tears. Just as quickly, the muscles in her face relaxed again.

Mrs. Cuming led a reporter and photographer through the house and into the son's small bedroom. The walls were decorated with a poster of the cover from Pink Floyd's "Dark Side of the Moon" on the wall and a picture of the World Trade Center towers.

She showed off his collection of shells and rocks, his uniform from cooking classes at Westchester Community College, his Lego collection, his mountain biking magazines, a calendar of scantily clad women that she had given him as a gift. She proudly displayed

a drawing of Spider-Man that her son had done several years ago. Drawing, she said, was one of his passions.

As she spoke, her hands moved quickly across everything - his rocks, his clothes, his magazines and comic books. A wash of sadness came over her. "I'm tired," she said. "I have a lot to do." She had gift baskets to open, a funeral to organize and, she hoped, generals and soldiers to see.



Yolanda B. Cuming, with a picture of her son, Pfc. Kevin A. Cuming of the Army. (Suzy Allman for The New York Times)

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.**

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

Hellertown Marine Dies After Attack

August 28, 2004 By JOE CARLSON and WAYNE FISHMAN, The Express-Times

A 23-year-old U.S. Marine corporal from Hellertown was killed by shrapnel on Thursday after his convoy was attacked in the Babil province of Iraq, sources said.

Bart R. Humlhanz, of 1430 Main St. died from a severed artery in an attack in which several other members of his unit were injured or killed, said Hellertown neighbor Tony Casciano.

Humlhanz was only two or three months into his second tour of duty in Iraq, Casciano said.

"He was a great kid," Casciano said. "He was a normal kid. Just another American kid who really doesn't know what's going on and gets killed."

Iraqi Police Battle U.S. Troops

28th Aug 2004 : KIRKUK, Iraq (Reuters)

U.S. forces fought with an Iraqi police unit in the centre of the northern city of Kirkuk on Saturday, police said, putting the clash down to a "mistake".

Two Iraqi policemen were badly wounded and U.S. forces arrested six of their comrades after the overnight battle, police Colonel Farhat Qader said.

"The battle happened by mistake," Qader said. **He declined to elaborate.**

Najaf: Armed Truce Begins: Mahdi Army Keeps Weapons

August 28, 2004 By DEXTER FILKINS, New York Times & Scott Baldauf | Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor & By Patrick Cockburn, The Independent U.K.

American commanders said they were under orders to arrest no one, least of all the Mahdi insurgents.

As the Mahdi Army fighters did not surrender themselves, neither did they give up their guns. Instead, they took the assault rifles and rocket launchers with which they had commandeered the shrine and loaded them onto donkey carts, covering them with blankets, grain sacks and television sets, and sending them away.

The fighters, many of them hollow-eyed and hunted-looking after days under fire, walked into the streets and left the city, moving through what appeared to be an agreed-upon exit route. **Others simply hung about, boasting of what they told themselves was an epic stand against the American Army.**

Hours later, Mahdi fighters, some still dressed in their signature black uniforms, could be seen stashing rocket launchers in crates and pushing them into roadside shops.

As the fighters streamed out of the city, the American troops who had fought their way to within 75 yards of the shrine in some of the war's most ferocious fighting kept their

distance, neither shooting the militiamen nor arresting them. **American commanders said they were under orders to arrest no one, least of all the Mahdi insurgents.**

The Mahdi Army fighters streamed out of the shrine Friday morning in various states of physical and emotional distress. One fighter, with a comrade on each side, limped out, bloodied and wearing a bandage on his right hand. Another fighter, dead for some time, was carried out on a stretcher.

Some of the young men seemed visibly reduced by the siege. And after three weeks of relentless American assaults, the number of Mahdi Army fighters in Najaf's Old City had fallen to just a few hundred from several thousand.

But for most of the Mahdi fighters still standing, morale seemed undiminished. In their days battling the Americans, they had constructed their own mythic tale about themselves, as the stalwart defenders of the shrine against a foreign army and its local satraps.

"Today is a victory," said Arkan Rahim, a 30-year-old Mahdi fighter, standing amid the wreckage near the shrine. **"We didn't surrender the shrine to the Americans, the biggest army in the world. We didn't surrender it to the Iraqi police. We protected it for our religious leaders."**

"Look at all the damage," an Iraqi man said to a friend as he walked down a street whose every building had been broken and crushed. **"Let God take revenge on the Americans for this."**

While the militiamen began heading home, the larger mystery seemed to be the commitment of Mr. Sadr.

This time, as before, the Americans and the Iraqi government, fearing his surging popularity, allowed him and his followers to go free in exchange for a promise not to cause any more trouble.

Inside the shrine, the faithful line up to remove their shoes, wash their hands and enter the inner sanctum of Shiite Islam's third-holiest site, after Mecca and Medina. **Others survey the slight damage to the shrine's structure, and look in begrudging awe at the young fighters who held off the American military for so long.**

"The Mahdi Army protected our holy place from the Americans, this was their duty," says a young demonstrator from Nasiriyah, who gives his name as Murad. **"Unless Americans leave Iraq, there will never be peace."**

In an alleyway next to Najaf's Imam Ali shrine, Commander Sayed Haider rested yesterday.

For more than three weeks he and his fellow fighters from the Mahdi army had battled against the vast firepower of the US military. Now was a time to reflect.

"We believe that we are right. This is our country. This is our city. We will not accept that people come and occupy our land," he said.

"We didn't give in for one reason," Mr Haider explained, as his platoon posed for photos, still holding their rocket-propelled grenade launchers. "Our beliefs," he said.

"I've been here for five months. I've only seen my wife once a month during that time. I'm going back to Baghdad as soon as I've finished my breakfast," Abu al-Musawi said, waving a victory kebab.

"It's peace," he added. Inside the shrine, dozens of Sadr supporters were dancing in a circle, waving placards of their leader; outside in the street a man was pushing a cart, carrying a mortar ineptly hidden under a blanket.

Asked whether he had now handed in his Kalashnikov to the Iraqi authorities, Abu Gaffar, a 25-year-old Mahdi army fighter, looked baffled. "It's my personal weapon. I can't give it to the police or the army. I'll keep it in a safe place," he promised.

Other survivors were unequivocal in their praise for Mr Sadr. "Moqtada is the son of Iraq," Abu Ahmed, 28, said on his way to the shrine, his two-year-old son Ahmed perched on his shoulders clutching a multicoloured plastic Kalashnikov.

What kind of future did he envisage for Ahmed? "He'll join the Mahdi army," Mr Ahmed said. "I'll teach him to fight Americans."

"In the last couple of hours before the ceasefire one of my friends died while he was firing his Kalashnikov at a helicopter," Jawad Abdul Khadi, 24, said. "Fortunately our brothers shot it down over the cemetery."

Mr Khadi claimed that during the entire battle only 61 of his "brothers" were killed - with only "one or two fighters" dying each day.

And what would happen now he was asked?

"There are still a lot of us left," he said.

MORE:

Najaf + Kufa + Fallujah: Free Cities

August 28, 2004 By Alissa J. Rubin, L.A. Times Staff Writer

The pact brokered by Sistani makes Najaf and Kufa, like Fallouja, in effect a no-go zone for U.S. troops.

BAGHDAD - Having returned from his sick bed to broker a peace deal freeing Najaf's sacred mosque of rebel fighters, Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani appears to have grown into

a larger-than-life figure, the one man who could end the deadly conflict between an upstart cleric and the Iraqi government and its U.S. backers.

Left in a weaker position were interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi and the U.S.-led military forces that back him. Allawi got no guarantee that Sadr would desist from armed activities outside Najaf and neighboring Kufa, leaving open the distinct possibility that he would remobilize his forces and remain, at the least, a thorn in the government's side.

It was the second time in less than three months that the Americans were unable to put a firm end to Sadr and his forces. In June, the cleric agreed to leave the Imam Ali Mosque in Najaf without a formal deal being struck, and he and his forces later returned. ***U.S. troops similarly withdrew from Fallouja after a Sunni Muslim insurgency during the spring.***

The pact brokered by Sistani makes Najaf and Kufa, like Fallouja, in effect a no-go zone for U.S. troops.

Far from constricting Sadr, the deal brokered by Sistani gave him much of what he wanted - except for the shrine.

Moreover, Allawi and the Americans failed to get what they wanted most: an end to Sadr. **In addition, the Americans, who did much of the fighting against the militia, looked to some as destroyers of the Old City of Najaf and as killers of civilians - usually inadvertently - and young Sadr militiamen.**

Even before day's end Friday, Sadr's assistants again were talking tough and gloating about having triumphed.

"There is a victory, a very great victory, because we didn't hand our weapons to the government or the occupation authorities," said Sheik Ahmed Shibani, a key Sadr lieutenant. "The Mahdi army pulled out from the city. We proved that the Mahdi army cannot be disarmed and will never be disarmed, and this is a victory.

"They have been kissing our hands to get us to participate in politics, but competing in an election under occupation is not possible," he said.

There is no avoiding the reality that the interim Iraqi government is facing an entrenched insurgency of fundamentalist Shiites.

In May and early June, when his followers occupied the shrine and then, under pressure, agreed to withdraw and disarm, they gradually crept back in.

Said a U.S. commander in Najaf: "This is exactly the same position we were in last time around."

The Americans, meanwhile, had to be the main military presence in Najaf because the Iraqi government's security forces were ill prepared. **Absent from the negotiations - the Americans wished to leave that role to Allawi - they looked to many as having**

exerted a heavy hand and being partially responsible for rampant destruction in Najaf.

"I'm hoping they let us stay and do some of the reconstruction work," said Lt. Col. Myles Miyamasu, commander of the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, in Najaf. "We want to set the record straight. We're not here to just destroy stuff." (He still doesn't get it. Iraqis want you gone. Take your "reconstruction" and shove it up your ass. Try it again: g-o-n-e, as in get out, leave, go away, get the fuck out of our country. Now! What does this idiot think the Iraqis are fighting for?)

MORE:

"I Hate Bush," Najaf Soldier Says

(This is Najaf 2 ½ months ago. It seems like 2 ½ years.)

10 Jun 04 Al-Jazeera.net (Qatar)

At the front gate of the main US military base in Najaf, Staff Sergeant Wolfine, 33, was more analytical about the situation. "This is an entirely different type of fighter than the Sunni militia that we fought in Falluja and Ramadi. They would use remotely detonated explosives and fire-and-dash ambushes.

"It was like fighting ghosts - there was nothing to shoot back at," Wolfine said. "But here in Najaf, Muqtada's fighters are fanatical - they come straight at us and are not afraid to die."

"Our unit was all packed up, the vehicles and weapons were stowed, even our extra uniforms were turned in, and we were sitting in Kuwait waiting to fly home when all hell broke loose and we were ordered to deploy back into Iraq," said Staff Sergeant Wolfine.

"I was due to go home and get married on 12 June, so I was pretty pissed personally. But as a senior leader, I had to tell the young soldiers to toughen up and get on with it. You can imagine that morale was in the toilet."

Overhearing our conversation, another soldier in 2ACR piped up: "Hey, I'm from Texas, and let me tell you that, right now, I hate Bush. Not for getting us into Iraq in the first place - I'm not even going to go there - but now he can't figure out a way to get us home except in a body bag."

"What really sucks is that until we got recalled to Najaf, this was the only combat unit in the American army that had not suffered any KIAs [killed in action]," said Wolfine.

"We'd sent home a lot of guys that got wounded - but now that we're sending home bodies. It changes things."

When asked how many KIAs the 2ACR has suffered, the veteran soldier smiled and said: "Whatever number the Pentagon has officially admitted to."

The ongoing Iraqi resistance has taken its toll on more than just the morale and numbers of the US troops. **The constant operational demand has worn down their vehicles and equipment.**

Battlefield modifications, such as the welding of additional armour plates to combat vehicles, have provided a stop-gap solution, **but the rate at which US Hummers have been destroyed in attacks by the resistance is worryingly high.**

New replacement vehicles are slow in arriving. Pointing at his battered and scarred vehicle, Wolfine says: "This baby was built in 1985 - one of the original batch of Hummers purchased by the army. **This is due for the scrap heap and we are long overdue to receive some of the newer up-armoured vehicles.**"

MORE:

Over A Month Ago, Occupation Tried To Provoke Shia Resistance Into Fighting

He complained that US troops had several times broken the ceasefire. "Two weeks ago, two of their Humvees turned up outside Sadr's home and the soldiers began questioning people. We told our forces not to open fire and we complained and then these soldiers were withdrawn."

By Robert Fisk In Najaf, The Independent (Great Britain) **20 July 2004**

For mile after mile south of Baghdad yesterday, the story was the same: empty police posts, abandoned Iraqi army and police checkpoints and a litter of burnt-out American fuel tankers and rocket-smashed police vehicles down the main highway to Hillah and Najaf. It was Afghanistan Mk2.

Iraqi government officials and Western diplomats tell journalists to avoid driving out of Baghdad; now I understand why. It is dangerous.

But my own fearful journey far down Highway 8 - scene of the murder of at least 15 Westerners - proved that the US-appointed Iraqi government controls little of the land south of the capital.

Only in the Sunni Muslim town of Mahmoudiya - where a car bomb exploded outside an Iraqi military recruiting centre last week - did I see Iraqi policemen. They were in a convoy of 11 battered white pick-ups, pointing Kalashnikovs at the crowds around them, driving on to the wrong side of the road when they became tangled in a traffic jam, screaming at motorists to clear their path at rifle point.

This was not a frightened American column - this was Iraq's own new blue-uniformed police force, rifles also directed at the windows of homes and shops and at the crowd of Iraqis which surged around them.

After the city of Hillah, I came across the police and a scattering of new Iraqi army soldiers.

I was not surprised. US forces are under so many daily guerrilla attacks that they cannot move by daylight along Highway 8 or, indeed, west of Baghdad through Falujah or Ramadi.

Across Iraq, their helicopters can fly no higher than 100 metres for fear of rocket attack.

Three faraway Apache helicopters were hedge-hopping their way towards the Euphrates.

That the "muqawama" - the resistance - controls so many hundreds of square miles around Baghdad should be no great surprise. The new US-appointed government has neither the police nor the soldiers to retake the land.

They announce martial laws and telephone tapping and bans on demonstrations and a new intelligence service -- but have neither the manpower nor the ability to turn these institutions into anything more than propaganda dreams for foreign journalists and a population that desperately craves security.

It was Sadr's men who courteously greeted me at their checkpoint in Najaf yesterday and took me to speak to Sheikh Smaisn at the Imam Ali shrine.

He complained that US troops had several times broken the ceasefire. "Two weeks ago, two of their Humvees turned up outside Sadr's home and the soldiers began questioning people. We told our forces not to open fire and we complained and then these soldiers were withdrawn."

"What we see in the occupation is American force with a British brain," he says. "This is just the same as the British occupation of Basra in 1914 and Baghdad in 1917. Our movement cannot be overcome because we are patriotic and Islamic, just like the forces opposing the occupation in the Sunni areas of Iraq. The westerners want to set up a sectarian government but we don't accept this. Now they have an insurrection from Fao in the south to Kirkuk in the north. Shia and Sunni are together. And any government that is not elected in free and honest elections - well, there's a problem there."

But the evidence of my journey yesterday - through the southern Sunni cities which long ago rejected American rule, suggested that Mr Allawi controls a capital without a country.

It took two weeks to arrange my trip, and I travelled with a Muslim cleric in my car who urged me to read my Arabic newspaper whenever urchins approached to urge my driver to buy window sponges.

They would run their sponges over the windows of the car and stare inside, looking - so we believed - for foreigners. They were spotters. And they didn't see me.

But what I saw was infinitely more disturbing: a nation whose government rules only its capital, a country about which we fantasise at our peril.

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/>

War In Baghdad

28 August 2004 The Associated Press, Baghdad

Shiite militants and U.S. forces battled throughout the Baghdad slum of Sadr City.

U.S. soldiers in Humvees drove through the neighborhood with loudspeakers, telling people to stay inside because coalition forces were "cleaning the area of armed men," according to an Associated Press reporter at the scene.

Gunfire crackled in the streets as U.S. tanks rolled by and helicopters patrolled the sky. Militants stood in the streets calmly launching round after round of mortars at U.S. forces. Black smoke rose over the neighborhood. A blue sedan was peppered with dozens of bullet holes.

Militants fired eight mortars at U.S. troops, hitting an electricity substation, cutting power to five or six blocks of Sadr City.

Another mortar round hit a fuel tank at the Golden Beach hotel, starting a fire that enveloped much of the building in flames.

Yet another round fell near the Palestine Hotel, where foreign journalists and contractors stay, but did not explode.

Iraqi Resistance War Reports For 23 August Through 25 August 2004

Translated and/or compiled by Muhammad Abu Nasr, member editorial board The Free Arab Voice

Resistance destroys Abrams tank, two Humvees at at-Tarimiyah.

The Resistance destroyed one massive US Abrams tank and two Humvees in the city of at-Tarimiyah. Witnesses told the correspondent that at least three Americans were killed when the Humvees were destroyed. The number of US casualties in the tank is unknown.

As fighting rages in an-Najaf, US bombs its own troops killing 50 Americans and Iraqi stooges.

US troops later dropped three massive anti-personnel container bombs on concentration points of Jaysh al-Mahdi militiamen. **The Jaysh al-Mahdi command responded by ordering a quick retreat from those positions, which the US aggressors and their Iraqi stooges then rushed to occupy. But US aircraft then homed in on direction finders that had been planted in the Jaysh al-Mahdi position by American agents earlier and attacked the area, now occupied by US troops and their Iraqi puppets with more anti-personnel bombs, killing at least 50 according to eyewitnesses who described the scene as an American massacre of their own forces.**

Jaysh al-Mahdi forces then sprung to take advantage of the US mistake, attacking their recently vacated positions and winning them back from the shattered Americans.

Resistance destroys tankers in attack in Diyala Province.

Iraqi Resistance forces used rocket-propelled grenades and attacked American aggressors in northern Diyala Province, destroying one Humvee and three fuel tankers at 7:00pm Monday evening. According to the local correspondent of Mafkarat al-Islam, eyewitnesses said that at least six US troops were killed and that fire was still burning in the tankers at 7:36pm Mecca time.

Jaysh al-Mahdi battles British in al-Basrah Monday night.

The al-Ashshar area of the southern city of al-Basrah was the scene of fighting Monday night between British aggressor troops and the Jaysh al-Mahdi militia. According to the local correspondent of Mafkarat al-Islam, the battles had lasted an hour and a half when the writer filed his report, having started at about 10:00pm Mecca time. Two British Jeeps were destroyed in Jaysh al-Mahdi rocket-propelled grenade attacks, all those aboard the vehicles being killed.

One Mafkarat al-Islam correspondent killed, another wounded in this week's combat journalism.

Mafkarat al-Islam, one of the most active news gathering organizations operating in Iraq on Monday night announced the death of one of their senior reporters who went out on Friday to cover fighting in at-Taji but was wounded severely in the head and died Monday morning.

The Mafkarat al-Islam reporter in an-Nasiriyah received several wounds in his body as he was covering fighting between the Jaysh al-Mahdi and the Italian aggressors on Wednesday last week. He is still recovering from his injuries. The writers for Mafkarat al-Islam are among the few who bring news from the actual line of battle and they are therefore among the main sources of the Iraqi Resistance report. The Iraqi Resistance Report expresses its condolences and best regards to our colleagues and brothers in the Mafkarat al-Islam.

Tuesday, 24 August 2004

US mounts ferocious bombing and bombardment of al-Fallujah as America seeks to prevent all news of the Resistance from reaching the outside world.

The local correspondent of Mafkarat al-Islam in al-Fallujah reported that American aggressors mounted intensive bombing raids on the industrial zone and the ash-Shuhadà and al-Askari neighborhoods of the city on Tuesday morning. American F-16s and F-18 fighter bombers dropped deadly ordnance from the air as American mortars pounded the districts continuously, in barrages that had been continuing for hours when the correspondent filed his report at 1:25pm Mecca time early Tuesday afternoon.

On Monday US troops attacked the al-Karmah area from which the Resistance launched painful strikes against US rear supply lines when the Americans laid siege to al-Fallujah the first time. Apparently the US command seeks this time to restrict Resistance operations to the city of al-Fallujah alone, and to deny them any help from their brothers outside the blockade.

For three days, Mafkarat al-Islam has encountered tremendous difficulty as it tried to report on al-Fallujah, since **all communications with the city have been cut. Satellite telephones are dangerous to use, since American aggressor aircraft regularly home in on their signals and bomb the telephone user and all those in the area, as happened in an-Najaf when a group of persons who used satellite phones were targeted and killed by US bombs.**

The local correspondent of Mafkarat al-Islam reported that Iraqi Resistance fighters detonated a bomb as a US patrol passed by near the former ar-Rashid military camp. Eyewitnesses reported that three American troops were killed and four others wounded. One Humvee was totally destroyed and another damaged.

Seven aggressor troops killed in Resistance ambush of fuel convoy in al-Latifiyah Tuesday evening.

Iraqi Resistance forces ambushed a US column at sunset on Tuesday in the town of al-Latifiyah, south of Baghdad. According to the correspondent of Mafkarat al-Islam, the Resistance attack left two fuel tank trucks ablaze and destroyed two Humvees. One of the Humvees had been driving in front of the tankers and the second had been at the tail end of the column.

The correspondent wrote that **a source in the puppet security service confirmed** that at least five troops who had been riding in the two Humvees were killed, and two more were killed and burned up in the tank trucks. An armed clash broke out immediately after the ambush but the Resistance succeeded in withdrawing from the area quickly when US reinforcements approached the area.

At least 15 Americans killed in one engagement in an-Najaf at noon on Tuesday.

At least 15 American troops were killed when three US tanks were destroyed in the fighting in an-Najaf Tuesday. The local correspondent of Mafkarat al-Islam reported that at noon the Jaysh al- Mahdi concentrated heavy fire on a US column advancing on the 1920 Revolution Street in the city destroying the three tanks and killing at least 15 American soldiers.

Jaysh al-Mahdi shoots down US Cobra helicopter over nearby al-Kufah.

Iraqi Resistance forces shot down an American Cobra helicopter over the city of al-Kufah on Tuesday. **Sources close to the Iraqi Resistance told the correspondent for Mafkarat al-Islam that an anti- aircraft rocket brought down the American chopper as it was mapping the concentrations of the Jaysh al-Mahdi militia in the area.**

Jaysh al-Mahdi in al-Basrah seizes British truck loaded with weapons for invader troops.

Jaysh al-Mahdi fighters in al-Basrah **managed to seize a truckload of weapons** intended for British aggressor troops Tuesday morning according to the local correspondent of Mafkarat al-Islam.

US sends 4,000 Marines to strengthen crumbling British hold on al- Basrah as fighting spreads throughout the second largest city in Iraq.

As the second largest city in Iraq, al-Basrah, seemed to be slipping from the clutches of its British occupiers, the United States dispatched on Tuesday some 4,000 American Marines to shore up crumbling Anglo-American defenses on that front.

In a dispatch posted at 3:05pm Tuesday afternoon Mecca time, the correspondent of Mafkarat al-Islam in al-Basrah reported that fierce battles were underway at that time between British invader troops and the Jaysh al-Mahdi. **Fighting was raging in several districts: in various parts of the al-Barradi`i neighborhood, in al-`Ashshar, al-Jumhuriyah, in the port area of Umm Qasr, and in az-Zubayr.** No information on casualties was available at that time.

Fighting between the British and the Jaysh al-Mahdi together with its Sunni al-Faruq Brigade allies left seven British soldiers dead at around 9:30am Tuesday morning, when an attack by the Resistance disabled four British military vehicles, according to a report filed by the al-Basrah correspondent of Mafkarat al-Islam. Eyewitnesses said that the Jaysh al-Mahdi had lost three dead and seven others wounded in that engagement.

The situation in the city has been shifting rapidly to the advantage of the Jaysh al-Mahdi militia and their Sunni Resistance allies. **The Jaysh al-Mahdi had earlier seized the Governorate offices of al-Basrah from the British, throwing the UK troops and their puppet police stooges out, an act that has happened repeatedly over recent months.**

US-appointed puppet regime wobbles as Washington reportedly threatens to replace Iraqi "prime minister" if costly failures in an-Najaf continue.

Iraqi sources have informed al-`Arabiyah satellite TV that Washington is growing impatient with the prime minister it appointed for Iraq, Iyyad `Allawi, and is threatening to replace him with the current "minister of defense," Hazim Sha`lan, if Allawi fails to solve the an-Najaf crisis soon.

US forces have reportedly suffered heavy losses in an-Najaf, adversely affecting Washington's opinion of their puppet in Baghdad.

For his part, `Allawi has already threatened to resign over the an-Najaf imbroglio, and observers note that he has already had open differences with his "national security adviser" Muwaffaq ar-Rabi`i, who negotiated a cease-fire with Muqtada as-Sadr only to have "prime minister" `Allawi overturn it. The Kuwaiti newspaper al-Qabas quoted Iraqi sources as saying that `Allawi intended to push the role of national security adviser ar-Rabi`i to the sidelines, relying instead on "state minister" Qasim Dawud.

Before he departed Baghdad at the end of June, US proconsul L. Paul Bremer appointed Muwaffaq ar-Rabi`i to the post of national security adviser for a term of five years making it impossible for `Allawi to replace him. Instead, therefore, the "prime minister" is seeking to limit his powers and expand the role of other officials more to his liking. America, however, is in the habit of simply getting rid of officials who fail to carry out the tasks assigned them by Washington, making Allawi's future that much more uncertain.

Wednesday, 25 August 2004

US launches most massive offensive on al-Fallujah since the occupation of Iraq.

US forces had begun a new major offensive Wednesday morning against the city, the largest attack ever undertaken since the occupation of Iraq had begun.

The correspondent reported that US forces began their all-out offensive on the city from all directions making airborne landings as F-14, F-16, and F-18 fighter bombers crisscrossed the skies above. The Americans have closed all the roads leading to and from al-Fallujah, including minor routes and byways, and have cut off all communications with the city.

The Mafkarat al-Islam correspondent reports that there are large columns of American forces coming up to the city from Baghdad, in particular from the central command. These are made up of giant Abrams tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles. Massive contingents of Marines are moving up driving Humvees.

Limited information indicates that the Iraqi Resistance forces in al-Fallujah have destroyed five US armored vehicles and killed at least 28 US soldiers. Individuals who manage to slip in and out of the city through the US blockade are able to provide information.

Eye witnesses report that this latest US offensive differs from previous attacks in that it is far more ferocious and in that the Americans have brought much larger forces into the assault.

Mafkarat al-Islam wrote that it appears that the Pentagon hopes to cover up its failure to crack the Resistance in an-Najaf by an attack on al-Fallujah. During the spring, the US similarly attempted to distract attention from its failure in al-Fallujah by opening a front in an-Najaf.

US slowly advances on Jaysh al-Mahdi positions in an-Najaf as as-Sistani's call erodes morale of some militiamen.

In a report filed at 7:35pm Mecca time Wednesday night, the correspondent of Mafkarat al-Islam in an-Najaf reported that more than 35 Jaysh al-Mahdi militiamen had died after an afternoon of intensive activity by US snipers approaching the environs of the Shi'i religious shrines where the city's defenders are dug in. American snipers take up positions atop houses and tall buildings in the city, and have also cut holes in the walls of houses large enough for them to operate their weapons without being seen or targeted in return.

Also involved in on the American side are mercenary members of the newly formed "Iraqi intelligence service" a puppet secret police being set up by the United States, and members of the Shi'i sectarian and collaborationist "Da`wah [Religious propaganda] Party."

The Mafkarat al-Islam correspondent in the city reported that the balance in the fighting appears to have begun to tilt in favor of the US aggressors, as the call of Shi'i religious authority `Ali as-Sistani for a protest march on an-Najaf has influenced some of the Jaysh al-Mahdi fighters.

After the afternoon US forces had been advancing on the area of the Shi'i religious shrines in an-Najaf. **In the al-Ahdath area, the correspondent reports, US forces are now only 350 to 375 meters from the shrine area.**

Jaysh al-Mahdi defenders are crowded in the shrine area, known as as-Sahn al-Haydari and also in the old part of the city, large parts of which were overrun by US invaders Wednesday afternoon. **That American advance allowed US snipers sufficient access to the area to greatly limit the freedom of movement of Jaysh al-Mahdi forces in the streets of the part of the city that they continue to control.** The Mafkarat al-Islam correspondent in the city reports that the US forces are meeting with fierce resistance from the Jaysh al-Mahdi, however. The American aggressors have only made slow progress because they are compelled to advance on foot by stages. **Most of the byways, streets, alleys, and passages in the old part of an-Najaf are too narrow for their wheeled vehicles. The streets range from as wide as 3.5 meters down to 1.5 meters in places. The houses are all next to one another with each structure being 75 to 150 square meters in area, inhibiting the advance of any mechanized Army.**

Jaysh al-Mahdi ambushes US troops, puppet forces using tunnels.

Jaysh al-Mahdi fighters killed 75 Iraqi puppet troops in addition to a number of US aggressor soldiers. Some estimates put the number of dead Americans at 14, all of them killed in Jaysh al-Mahdi ambushes in "lower" an-Najaf, according to the local correspondent for Mafkarat al-Islam.

The old city of an-Najaf, he writes, is made up of two sections the upper an-Najaf which is above ground, and lower an-Najaf which is below ground. The underground part of the city was reportedly excavated by dissident Shi`i religious leaders in the time of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in order to maintain their anti-government activities. The old city of an-Najaf thus became a city of buildings above ground and tunnels beneath.

On Wednesday morning, those tunnels were used by Jaysh al-Mahdi fighters to launch ambushes of US troops and their puppets.

US forces launch savage assault on an-Najaf with napalm and thousands of cluster bombs.

Late in the afternoon of Wednesday, US aggressor forces shelled areas in which the Jaysh al-Mahdi militia is entrenched in an-Najaf in the old part of the city, according to a report posted by the Mafkarat al-Islam correspondent in the city at 9:00pm Mecca time Wednesday night. US troops used weapons that are banned by international law.

The US forces have dropped napalm and cluster bombs on Jaysh al-Mahdi positions. For two straight hours, American aggressor troops rained eight container bombs each made up of hundreds of cluster bombs on the positions of the city's defenders.

The Mafkarat al-Islam correspondent reported that the bombing has been extremely heavy and intense, preventing all movement in the streets of the area. Anyone trying to move, even if he survived the cluster bombs and napalm, would be cut down by American snipers who had taken up positions on rooftops.

In a dispatch posted at 9:50pm Mecca time Wednesday night, the correspondent for Mafkarat al-Islam in an-Najaf reported that US aggressor forces have surrounded between 6,000 and 10,000 Jaysh al-Mahdi fighters in parts of the old city and shrine area known as as-Sahn al-Haydari.

Jaysh al-Mahdi forces kill two British soldiers near al-Basrah, Wednesday morning.

In the southern city of al-Basrah, Jaysh al-Mahdi militiamen ambushed British forces in an area five miles from the city on Wednesday morning. The local correspondent of Mafkarat al-Islam in the city reported that the attack killed two British soldiers, wounded four others, and left three armored vehicles ablaze.

To counter the rise in Resistance activity, US forces for the first time landed in the city, encircling a town called al-Habbaniyah east of al-Basrah.

TROOP NEWS

Miracle In Najaf:

Major Gets The Point

27 August 2004 The Associated Press

"The way you defeat an insurgency is by co-opting the population," the 2nd Battalion's executive officer, Maj. Scott Jackson said. "You don't end an insurgency by leveling the city."

"We are destroying this city," a Marine officer said with a sigh at one point in the battle, described by some locals as a siege.

“This Is Not The American Military I Served In”

August 24, 2004 Sam Hamod

As one former officer made clear in a recent comment to me, “All they had to do was to starve him (**Sadr**) out. **It appears they want to kill this man and to make more long term problems in Iraq.**

“But, this is not the American military I served in.” This statement by a decorated veteran major officer mirrors the thinking of many who are trying to help people understand the truth of what is going on in Iraq.

Sound Familiar?

August 27, 2004 By LARRY HEINEMANN, NYTimes.com

When I came back from Vietnam, I always thought that the next argument was going to be between those who went overseas and those who stayed at home. But it turns out that the big argument now is between those veterans who thought the war was right and those who didn't. And further, it is amazing to me that the argument should revolve around medals and Purple Hearts and honorable service.

The plain fact is that in Vietnam medals were handed out like popcorn, right down to the Good Conduct Medal and the Rifle Sharpshooter Badge, particularly among career-minded officers and NCO's.

Ticket-punching lifers, we called them with all the derision that the phrase implies; they seemed more interested in tending their precious careers than anything else.
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I know officers who were given the Bronze Star for simply being in country (the ultimate in merit badges). An Air Force pilot told me that his commanding officer

suggested that he write himself up for a Distinguished Flying Cross on no particular account, and that he, the commander, would sign it.

To his credit, my friend did not do so. By the same token, a writer friend of mine keeps his Bronze Star to prove to his children and grandchildren that despite what they may hear about Vietnam, he acted the way an adult is supposed to act, with compassion and grit, and that if he is not especially proud of his service in Vietnam, he's not ashamed of it, either.

What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Send to contact@militaryproject.org. Name, I.D., withheld on request. Replies confidential.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Six Cops Dead, 9 Wounded In Baquaba Resistance Attack

BAQUBA, Iraq, Aug 28 (AFP)

Six Iraqi policemen were shot dead and 9 people Saturday when resistance fighters travelling in two minibuses opened fire on a checkpoint in Baquba, medics said.

The attack happened on a main road in the eastern Al-Tahir district of the city at about 4:00 pm (1200 GMT), said Brigadier General Abdul Salam Mahmud.

Police manning the checkpoint came under a hail of bullets, before the resistance soldiers took flight in their minibuses.

A doctor said six people were killed and 11 others wounded -- nine of them police officers.

Sadr Loyalty Grows

8.26.04 By Scott Baldauf, Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

BAGHDAD – It's a hot summer morning, as Doctor Hassan heads out on his rounds to see the wounded. His patients are all in their homes scattered throughout Sadr City. They are fighters for the Mahdi Army, who are staying out of hospitals to avoid being arrested by US forces.

Doctor Hassan, who did not want to give his last name, is a member of the Mahdi Army, and this mobile medical unit is another indication that the Mahdi Army of Moqtada al-Sadr is more than a street gang or personality cult.

Mr. Sadr's organization, already battered from weeks of battling with the US, continues to be resilient.

Almost unknown to the world before its violent uprising last April against US forces in Baghdad and elsewhere, **the Mahdi Army is emerging as a well-organized parallel government**

In most cities where the Mahdi Army is present, there are Mahdi Army religious courts for resolving disputes and punishing criminals; Mahdi Army police patrols; and even Mahdi Army town councils for planning social programs.

All of these services pay political dividends, earning the admiration of many Shiites who don't necessarily support Sadr or his militia. **And while Sadr's militia has suffered major losses in Najaf, by standing up to the US and Iraqi forces for weeks, Sadr has also raised his stature in the eyes of many Iraqis.**

In Sadr City, the news from Najaf seemed quite distant. For Mahdi Army fighters here, the war is just beginning. And even for those who have been severely wounded say they are preparing for the next battle.

Abu Hassan, one of Hassan's patients, says the fighters in Najaf will stay and fight to the last man. "This is their home territory, and their own families will encourage them to fight and die, and then they will go to heaven," he says.

MORE:

August 28, 2004 PATRICK COCKBURN, CouterPunch

For the government of Mr Allawi the outcome is a setback. "Their failure to finish Sadr is a defeat," says Ghasan Attiyah, the Iraqi commentator and historian. "If they couldn't eliminate him, why did they get into this crisis in the first place?"

Mr Allawi, two months after he was appointed head of an interim government by the US, has narrowed rather than expanded his already limited base of support.

Once again, Washington should learn that in Iraq military power does not necessarily turn into political influence.

Sadr and his militiamen may now withdraw from the shrine in the centre of Najaf but they have won a victory by surviving.

<p>An extraordinary aspect of the latest crisis is that it is the third time since April that the US has confronted Sadr, and each time has discovered that it dare not pay the political cost of eliminating him.</p>

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

**New York Collaborator Cops Arrest Anti-War Bicycle Riders (!):
Occupation Regime Says More Arrests Coming:
BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME NOW. WE NEED YOU HERE
TO PROTECT US!**



Ritu Kalra, of New York, is arrested, along with at least 250 other bicycle riders that were riding in a mass protest through the city, the first major crackdown on demonstrators around the Republican National Convention Friday, Aug. 27, 2004. (AP Photo/Jennifer Szymaszek)

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

Got That Right

27 August 2004 By Chaka Ferguson, The Associated Press

NEW YORK - Kat McIver was so disgusted with the Democratic and Republican parties that she walked 258 miles from Boston to New York to protest at both of their conventions.

McIver, a 22-year-old activist from Orange County, Calif., helped organize DNC2RNC, a march that began at the Democratic Convention in Boston and ended Thursday blocks south of Madison Square Garden, where the Republican National Convention will begin on Monday.

"The two parties are not representative of the people," she said. "They represent corporate greed."

Powell Runs Away From Athens Protests



AP Photo

Aug 28 ATHENS, Greece & IslamOnline.net & By Susan Sachs, New York Times

Secretary of State Colin Powell on Saturday canceled a weekend visit to attend the closing ceremony of the Olympics, just hours after demonstrators marched through central Athens.

At least three people were injured on Friday when police fired tear gas and sparred with rock-throwing demonstrators during a rally to protest the planned weekend visit of Secretary of State Colin L. Powell.

The heart of Athens was closed for about three hours as an estimated 2,000 people, shouting slogans against the war in Iraq and globalization, faced off with Greek Special Forces troops who blocked them from marching on the American Embassy.

"It is an enormous victory of the anti-war movement that managed to cancel the visit of the arch-killer Powell," protest organizer Yiannis Sifahakis told The Associated Press. "For what other reason could the visit have been cancelled?," said Petros Konstantinou of "Genoa 2001," an anti-globalization group that co-organized the rally.

Organizers of the protests, held mainly over "Iraq occupation", said the massive demonstrations against Powell's visit were the main reason behind the cancellation of his visit to Athens .

Greeks harbor anti-American feelings primarily over U.S. support of the 1967-74 military junta, which persecuted its leftist opponents. Many Greeks also believe Washington ignores the concerns of smaller and weaker countries. **(Imagine that!)**

The Athens Olympics: Free-Style Cop-Fighting



While Politicians Turn Their Backs, Troops Die

08 August 2004 By John Aloysius Farrell, Denver Post

Washington - We didn't hear about the lives of Spec. Justin Onwordi or Pfc. Harry Shondee Jr. at the Democratic convention.

And I doubt we'll hear much about their deaths when the Republicans gather in New York this month.

Onwordi, 28, a Nigerian immigrant, and Shondee, a 19-year-old Navajo, were on duty with the 1st Cavalry Division in Iraq when, early last week, they gave their lives for their country.

The Pentagon did not have much to say about their deaths. In a terse news release of some 100 words, the government said that the two Arizonans had been killed "when an improvised explosive device detonated near the vehicle they were traveling in."

The attack took place in Baghdad on Monday. Onwordi died that day. Shondee fought for life, then succumbed Tuesday. **Their deaths came with news that four other American soldiers were also killed in Iraq in the same 24-hour cycle.**

Six dead in 24 hours. A few weeks back - before the "transfer of power" in Iraq - it might have been a front page headline. But The New York Times ran the news at the bottom of Page 8; The Washington Post on Page 15. Here at The Denver Post, we put the story on Page 16. The TV news networks mentioned the deaths parenthetically.

The political parties are no more forthcoming; each has determined that it is not in its interest to talk about the dead and wounded in Iraq.

I don't understand. We pulled Ambassador Paul Bremer out and replaced him with Ambassador John Negroponte. Why should that make our guys and gals, and their deaths and wounds, invisible?

The dying and maiming has gone on unabated since we transferred authority in June. In terms understood by dozens of grieving American families, July ranks fourth in the number of soldiers killed (54) and fifth in the number wounded (404) since President Bush declared an end to major combat operations in May 2003.

I have resisted comparisons of Iraq and Vietnam. But in the way we are obviously adding names to some future Iraq memorial wall, I'm having flashbacks to those terrible years when we put our faith in Richard Nixon's secret plan to "Vietnamize" the war and paid dearly, and in vain, for the ever-elusive "peace with honor."

The obituaries tell us a little bit more about Justin Onwordi and Harry Shondee.

Shondee lived on the Navajo reservation. He was a member of the National Honor Society at Ganado High School and a good golfer.

Onwordi, who came here from Nigeria, leaves behind a wife, Monique, and a new son, Jonathan, who was born July 7.

Onwordi had been home on leave for the birth. He at least got to hold a son who now will never know him.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Afghan Liberation, Bush Style

August 27, 2004 Conor Foley, theage.com.au

When I asked one Afghan judge why he had made no official complaint after hearing two detainees' allegations of mistreatment in US military custody, he told me, only half joking, that he did not want to end up in Guantanamo Bay himself.

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