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Saturday, April 12, 2003

Headlines

☒ E-MAIL TO A FRIEND

Published on Thursday, April 10, 2003 by the Inter Press Service

U.S. Govt Accused of War Crimes Against Journalists

by Julio Godoy

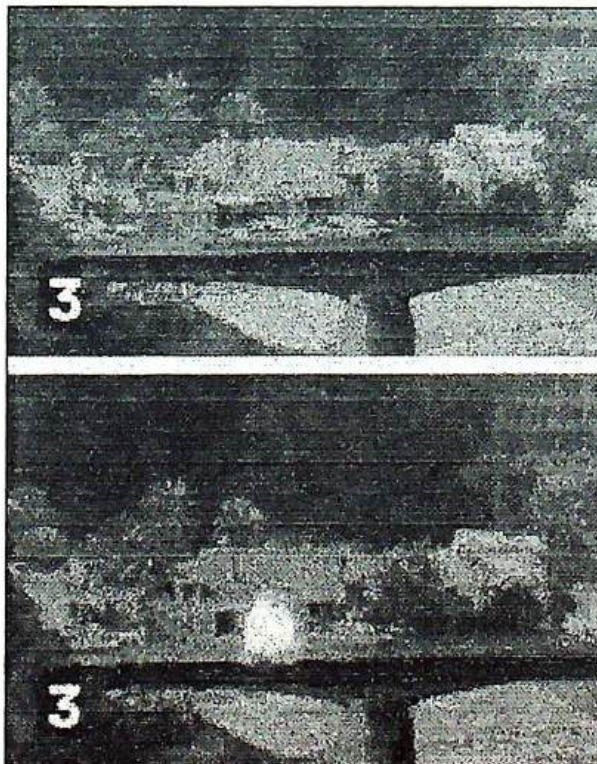
PARIS - International journalists' organizations are accusing the U.S. government of committing war crimes in Iraq by intentionally firing at war correspondents.

The Paris-based journalists' organization 'Reporters without Borders' (RSF, after its French name), called on the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission to investigate whether by attacking journalists in Iraq the U.S.-British coalition forces were not violating international humanitarian law.

"A media outlet cannot be a military target under international law and its equipment and installations are civilian property protected as such under the Geneva Conventions," said Reporters without Border secretary-general Robert Ménard.

"Only an objective and impartial enquiry can determine whether or not the Conventions have been violated," Ménard claimed.

It is the first time since its existence that the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission is being petitioned. Set up in 1991 under the First Additional Protocol of the Geneva Conventions, the Commission's task is investigating any alleged serious violation of international humanitarian law.



TV footage shot by France 3 (a French television channel) showing a US Abrams tank firing towards the Palestine hotel in Baghdad killing two journalists (AFP/France 3)

Similarly, the Brussels-based International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) called for an independent inquiry on the U.S. attacks against the Palestine Hotel and the bureaus of Al-Jazeera and Abu Dhabi television channels.

The New-York based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) also called the U.S. attacks against journalists in Iraq "a violation of the Geneva Convention."

In a letter to U.S. defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld, CPJ director Joel Simon

wrote on Tuesday: "The Committee is gravely concerned by a series of U.S. military strikes against known media locations in Baghdad today that have left three journalists dead and several wounded."

"We believe these attacks violate the Geneva Conventions," Simon pointed out.

On Tuesday, U.S. troops attacked the Baghdad bureau of the Qatar-based Al Jazeera, killing one war correspondent, and wounding another. In another attack, a U.S. tank fired a shell at the Palestine Hotel in Baghdad, killing two other reporters and wounding three.

The hotel is well known as the unofficial Baghdadi center of international press. A large number of foreign correspondents covering the war stay there.

Ménard, RSF's secretary-general, said that all independent evidence on the U.S. attacks against the hotel shows that the firing was deliberate.

"Film shot by the French television station France 3, and descriptions by journalists, prove that the neighborhood around the hotel was very quiet at the hour of the attack, and that the U.S. tank crew took their time, waiting for a couple of minutes and adjusting its gun before opening fire," Ménard said.

"This evidence does not match the U.S. version of an attack in self-defense and we can only conclude that the U.S. Army deliberately and without warning targeted journalists," Ménard added.

Caroline Sines, a French television correspondent covering the war in Baghdad, confirmed Ménard's accusations against the U.S. troops.

"I was at the Palestine Hotel at the moment of the attack, around one pm, Baghdad time, and my crew filmed everything," Sines said. "Our films shows that the U.S. tank took its time at targeting the 14th floor of the hotel, where many journalists are hosted, at a moment of complete calm," Sines said.

Menard urged the "U.S. forces to prove that the incident was not a deliberate attack to dissuade or prevent journalists from continuing to report on what is happening in Baghdad."

"We are appalled at what happened because it was known that journalists were working both at the Palestine Hotel as well at the Al-Jazeera bureau," Ménard pointed out.

One Al-Jazeera camera operator was also killed on Tuesday by an apparently intentional U.S. bombing of the pan-Arab TV station's offices elsewhere in Baghdad. The nearby premises of Abu Dhabi TV were also damaged by the bombing.

The Qatar-based television network recalled that prior to the conflict, it had provided the U.S. military authorities with the specific coordinates of its Baghdad offices. This information was confirmed by the Committee to Protect Journalists in the letter to Donald Rumsfeld.

"CPJ has seen a copy of Al-Jazeera's February letter to Pentagon spokeswoman Victoria Clarke outlining these coordinates," Joel Simon wrote to Rumsfeld.

Simon called Rumsfeld "to launch an immediate and thorough investigation into these incidents and to make the findings public." The CPJ also recalled to the U.S. military authorities that more than 100 independent journalists continue to operate in Baghdad from both the Palestine and the nearby Sheraton hotels.

"The U.S. military has a clear obligation to avoid harming the correspondents while

carrying out (war) operations," Simon said in his letter to Rumsfeld.

Aidan White, General Secretary of the International Federation of Journalists, said, "There is no doubt at all that these attacks could be targeting journalists. If so, they are grave and serious violations of international law."

"The bombing of hotels where journalists are staying and targeting of Arab media is particularly shocking events in a war which is being fought in the name of democracy," White said. "Those who are responsible must be brought to justice".

"The United Nations system and the international media community must be fully engaged in finding out what happened in these cases and action must be taken to ensure it never happens again," White said. "We can expect denials of intent from the military, but what we really want is the truth."

The IFJ says that the global media community, including journalists, media organizations and press freedom campaigners, should join hands under the banner of the newly-formed International News Safety Institute to hold a complete and in depth inquiry.

The INSI is a coalition of more than 100 organizations campaigning for a global news safety program.

The IFJ also condemned "what appears to be Iraqi tactics of using civilians and journalists as a 'human shield' against attack." "The Baghdad authorities are just as culpable as the U.S. with their reckless disregard for civilian lives," White said.

Both the IFJ and RSF recalled that Al Jazeera has become a frequent target of U.S. and British attacks in Iraq and in Afghanistan.

Earlier in the war in Iraq, four members of the pan-Arab television crew in the southern city of Basra came under gunfire from British tanks on March 29 as they were filming distribution of food by Iraqi government officials.

One of the station's cameramen went missing and was later found to have been held for 12 hours by U.S. troops. Al-Jazeera reporters were the only journalists in Basra at the time.

The Al-Jazeera offices in Kabul, Afghanistan, were also bombed by U.S. forces during the war against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in November 2001.

To have jurisdiction in a war, the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission has to be petitioned by one of the parties in the conflict or by one of the countries that have recognized its jurisdiction.

To conduct an investigation, all the belligerents must accept its authority. Among the countries involved in the Iraq war, only Australia and the United Kingdom have formally recognized it, allowing an investigation to go ahead as far as they are concerned.

Neither the United States nor Iraq have yet accepted the principle of such an enquiry.

Since the beginning of the Iraqi war on March 20, ten journalists have been killed by the conflicting parties, and two other died in war related accidents. At least eight other correspondents have been wounded. Two other reporters' whereabouts remain unknown.

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War in Iraq

The impact on business and the economy... [click here](#)

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Civilian casualty figures cause concern

By Richard McGregor in Qatar, Peter Spiegel in Washington and Frances Williams in Geneva
Published: April 10 2003 22:49 | Last Updated: April 10 2003 22:49



The US military has said repeatedly since the opening of the Iraq war that its campaign has been unsurpassed in the attention paid to its choice of targets and the precision in which it has taken them out.

However, the US has declined to provide any figures on one measure of how well it has met the high standards it set for

itself - the number of civilian casualties.

"It's just something we cannot get our arms around at this point. It will take time," said Brigadier-General Vincent Brooks, the US spokesman at Central Command in Qatar.

Brig-Gen Brooks said he knew of no case in the history of warfare where all casualties had been accurately calculated, adding: "And I don't anticipate that will happen here."

Before it disintegrated this week, the Iraqi regime had put civilian casualties at 1,252, with 5,103 injured, without providing any guidance about how it calculated the figure. With battlefields stretching over hundreds of kilometres, the Pentagon says it is impossible to come up with accurate numbers.

Defence officials in Washington acknowledge they do attempt to track military casualties, but the only number discussed thus far in the war was an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 Iraqi troops killed during the attack on Republican Guard forces on the outskirts of Baghdad last week.

"Even as we do battle damage assessment, trying to get numbers of casualties is really inexact," said Major General Stanley McChrystal of the US military's joint staff.

Indeed, the US has never published official estimates of Iraqi casualties in the 1991 Gulf war. The closest thing to an official count came in a 1991 Defense Intelligence Agency report, which estimated that 100,000 Iraqi troops had been killed and 300,000 wounded. No such estimates were ever made of civilians killed.

A British official estimated that about 20,000-25,000 Iraqi soldiers had been killed in the three weeks of this conflict, mainly in what he described as "carnage" caused by coalition bombing.

But given the scale of the destruction of the Iraqi army, this figure could well be an underestimate. The same official was unable to put any figure on civilian casualties.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said this week that hospitals in Baghdad had been overwhelmed by the influx of wounded civilians and military following the US attacks on the city, and had long since lost count of the numbers.

Before last weekend, when hundreds of casualties resulted from intense overnight bombing, the ICRC had reported about 450 war-wounded in various Baghdad hospitals since the US-led invasion began. In addition, at least 280 people were reported hurt in fighting at Hilla at the beginning of April.

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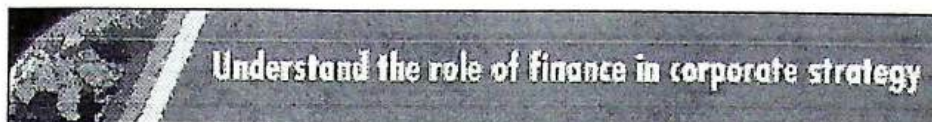
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Sat, Apr 12, 2003, 10:44 GMT

Dozens of bodies litter streets of Baghdad suburb



BAGHDAD, April 10 (AFP) -

Dozens of bodies litter streets of Baghdad suburb

BAGHDAD, April 10 (AFP) - Dozens of bodies and burnt-out cars littered the streets of the southwestern Baghdad neighbourhood of Al-Dora on Thursday, an AFP photographer reported.

Bodies, including those of children, were still strewn over the road between Al-Dora and the international airport, which is under the control of US forces.

The putrid, fly-covered corpses were being buried along the sides of the road by volunteers, according to the photographer.

A US officer at the scene said Saddam's Fedayeen paramilitary militia attacked an American convoy which retaliated, causing the deaths.

Witnesses, however, said US soldiers opened fire on cars carrying civilians they thought posed a threat.

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Iraq-war-Baghdad-bodies

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US Troops 'Mow Down' Baghdad Ambulance - 2 Dead

Al Jazeera
4-10-3

Two Iraqis are dead and three wounded Wednesday after US troops shot at an ambulance in central Baghdad. Speaking to the AFP news agency, Belgian doctor Geert Van Moorter said that the driver was wounded in the stomach while the co-pilot had leg wounds.

The American troops just mowed down the ambulance which was transporting wounded people from the Saddam Centre for Plastic Surgery to another hospital," he said.

The ambulance had been carrying three men wounded by exchanges of fire in the city, he said, adding that two of them were among the dead.

Van Moorter, from the Belgian association Medical Aid for the Third World slammed US troops involved in the incident. "This is completely unacceptable, and when I went up to a US officer to denounce such behaviour, he just said: The ambulance could contain explosives."

Officials from CENTCOM in Qatar were unaware of the incident, and have yet to comment.--- Al Jazeera with agency inputs

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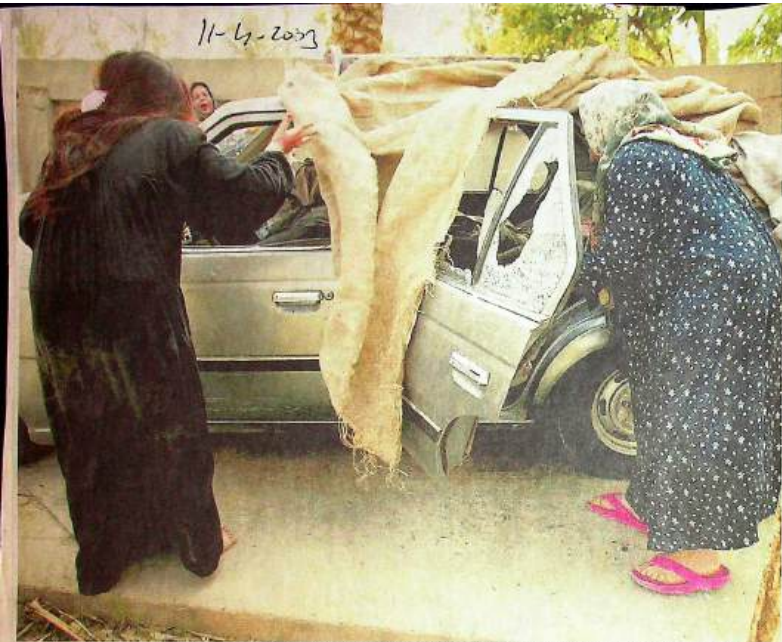
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11-4-2003



BAGDAD - Dit is de auto waarin de drie mannen zaten die woensdagavond door Amerikaanse mariniers werden doodgeschoten bij een controlpost. Zij zouden een stoppteken hebben genegeerd. Hun familieleden wachtten de hele nacht tevergeefs op de mannen, onder wie een vader en een zoon. Pas gisteren werd de familie duidelijk dat de mannen gedood waren, namelijk toen de auto met de drie lichamen er nog in, bij hun huis werd afgeleverd. Een vrouw viel flauw. (Foto's AP/Carolyn Cole, Los Angeles Times)

Oekraïne eist onderzoek en bestrafing

KIEV, 11 APRIL. De regering van Oekraïne heeft van de Verenigde Staten en het Verenigd Koninkrijk geëist dat de militairen die deze week het Palestijnse hotel in Bagdad beschoten en daarbij een Oekraïense cameraman van het persbureau Reuters doodden, voor de rechter komen. De man, Taras Prochuk, laat een vrouw en een zoon achter. De Amerikaanse ambassade in Kiev meldde dat het onderzoek van de Amerikaanse legerleiding naar het incident voortduurt. (AP)

Dagboek uit Bagdad, 11 april, 17.30u: Dr. Geert Van Moorter per satelliettelefoon

Oorlogsmisdaden van VS-bezettingstroepen blijven onbestraft

Bert De Belder



"We hebben hier vandaag nog afschuwelijke verhalen gehoord over het gedrag van de VS-soldaten. Gewonden die tekenen doen aan passerende Amerikaanse tanks om te worden meegenomen: tevergeefs. Medisch personeel die niet eens meer durven gaan vragen aan Amerikaanse checkpoints om door te mogen met gewonden: elke Irakees die VS-militairen nadert, riskeert een kogel. Ze moeten dan maar aan ons, buitenlanders, vragen om met de VS-militairen te gaan onderhandelen om de

gewonden door te laten...

Een journalist van The London Mail vertelde me hoe gedegouteerd hij was van de Amerikaanse troepen. Hij had ze twee ongewapende Irakezen zien neerknallen, zonder enige aanleiding. Ook een man die de twee te hulp wou snellen, legden ze koelbloedig neer! 'Ze doen zoals in Vietnam', zuchtte de journalist, 'ze schieten op alles wat beweegt.' Ik sprak hierover een dokter van het Amerikaans leger aan. Weet je wat die antwoordde? 'Je moet dat begrijpen, dat zijn jonge gasten, die hebben wat schrik, en schieten dan wat sneller.' Het is hier de complete straffeloosheid voor de VS-militairen, ze kunnen zich alles permitteren en riskeren op geen enkele manier een proces. 'Nobody is perfect!', zeggen ze dan. Of het was een 'pre-emptive strike'. Zoals ze de hele oorlog tegen Irak een 'pre-emptive strike' is, tegen het dreigende gevaar van het gebruik van massavernietigingswapens door Saddam – die noch de wapeninspecteurs, noch de VS-bezettingstroepen hebben kunnen vinden! – zo is het beschieten van een ziekenwagen allicht ook een noodzakelijke 'pre-emptive strike', want... er zouden wel eens explosieven in de ambulance kunnen inzitten! Twee doden, drie zwaargewonden? 'Collateral damage'!



De VS-soldaten lopen hier rond met een ongelooflijke arrogantie. We moeten ons echt inhouden om niet heel de tijd ruzie te maken met hen. Geregeld snauwen wij ze af, of lachen we ze uit. Zoals die militairen die een standbeeld van Saddam in stukjes aan het kappen waren, om als souvenir naar huis te nemen. Ik riep hen toe: "Ha, jullie zijn echte helden, knap werk dat jullie

doen, proficiat!" De sukkels dachten dat ik het meende, en keken me dankbaar aan. "Ja, jullie doen het geweldig! Jullie doorzeven een ziekenwagen met kogels. Jullie maken honderden burgerslachtoffers. Jullie laten ziekenhuizen plunderen en gewonden creperen. Echte helden zijn jullie!" Het duurde een hele tijd eer de soldaten doorhadden dat ik de spot met hen dreef, met hun brokjes Saddam-standbeeld in hun handen, en hen tegelijk uitkafferde voor het bloed aan hun handen. Uiteindelijk lachten ze toch maar groen. En ik, ik lachte in mijn vuistje.



Wed, Apr 23, 2003, 13:06 GMT

IRAQ: U.N. CONDEMNS 'INCREDIBLE' CIVILIAN DEATHS



UNITED NATIONS, Apr 11, 2003 (Inter Press Service via COMTEX) — The rising number of civilian deaths in Iraq - caused mostly by heavy U.S. firepower - has evoked strong protests and condemnation by senior U.N. officials and global human rights and humanitarian groups.

Doctors who visited southern Iraq have witnessed "incredible" levels of civilian casualties, including a truckload of dismembered women and children in the region of Hilla about 160 kilometres south of Baghdad, according to Roland Huguenin of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

"At this stage, we cannot comment on the nature of what happened exactly at that place ... but it was definitely a different pattern from what we had seen in Basra and Baghdad. I am sure there will be investigations," he added.

U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Sergio Vieira de Mello said he was "deeply disturbed" by reports of the increasing deaths, and injuries, of civilians during the 22-day U.S.-led attack on Iraq.

"The conflict has reminded us once again of the cruelty of war, and that the innocent are invariably its main victims," he added.

In a report from Baghdad, the 'New York Times' said Thursday that the number of civilians killed will never be known for two reasons: some "civilians" might have been military personnel who switched to civilian clothes, and more importantly, U.S. deployment of 2,000-pound "bunker busting" bombs might have reduced some humans to fine particles.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan told reporters Thursday that one of his major priorities is to make sure that the civilian population is protected.

"I have also been hearing about situations in hospitals, lack of medication and all that. We are trying to do whatever we can with the World Health Organization (WHO), Red Cross and our own humanitarian people to see how we can get medication in as soon as possible."

U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) Executive Director Carol Bellamy said she was particularly concerned about the use of cluster bombs by U.S. forces in densely populated urban areas. "These cruel and clumsy weapons are already reported to have claimed the lives of Iraqi children and their use must end. The taking of a child's life is never an acceptable cost of war," she added.

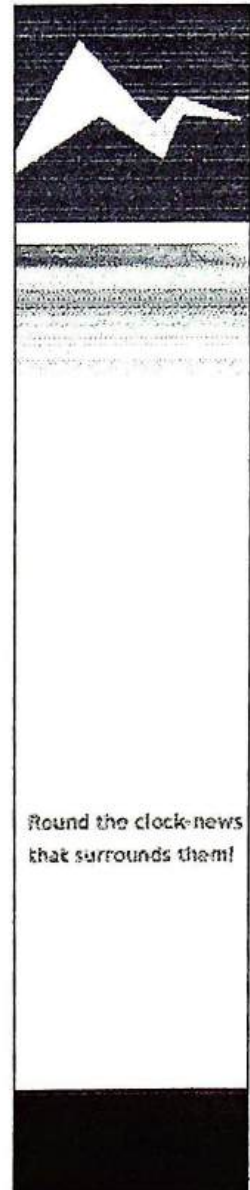
Huguenin said that most of the dead and injured appeared to be victims of "bombs and projectiles".

New York-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) has already expressed concern over U.S. troops' use of cluster bombs.

"The United States should not be using these weapons," Steve Goose, executive director of the arms division of HRW, said last week. "Iraqi civilians will be paying the price with their lives and limbs for many years," he added.

While the use of the weapon has not yet been confirmed by U.S. military officials, Goose said it is evident from television images and stories from reporters that U.S. forces are using artillery projectiles and rockets containing large numbers of sub-munitions or cluster munitions.

When they fail to explode on impact as designed, they become hazardous explosive "duds", functioning like volatile, indiscriminate anti-personnel landmines, he added.



On Monday, several representatives of ICRC, Doctors Without Borders and Amnesty International addressed a meeting of the U.N. Security Council focusing on the high casualty rate among civilians.

"The main current concern pertains to the civilian population exposed to direct violence from combat activities. Civilians are caught in the crossfire; they are also injured, wounded and killed by aerial bombardments and intense ground fighting," Nicolas de Torrente, executive director of Doctors Without Borders-USA, told the Council.

As the conflict has intensified, he warned, the volume of casualties is growing, and hospitals are increasingly overwhelmed.

"The precarious situation of Iraqi civilians caught up in this conflict underlines the critical importance for all warring parties to fully respect international humanitarian law," de Torrente said.

"It is imperative that warring parties do their utmost to minimise the impact on civilians and prevent human suffering."

The recent suicide bombings in Baghdad against U.S. military has also reportedly prompted U.S. officials to order soldiers to shoot civilians on sight if they appear to be potential suicide bombers.

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Who is to blame for the collapse in morality that followed the 'liberation'?

Pillage merits a specific prevention clause in the Geneva Conventions, just as it did in the 1907 Hague Convention

By Robert Fisk in Baghdad - 12 April 2003

<http://argument.independent.co.uk/commentators/story.jsp?story=396346>

Let's talk war crimes. Yes, I know about the war crimes of Saddam. He slaughtered the innocent, gassed the Kurds, tortured his people and – though it is true we remained good friends with this butcher for more than half of his horrible career – could be held responsible for killing up to a million people, the death toll of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war. But while we are congratulating ourselves on the "liberation" of Baghdad, an event that is fast turning into a nightmare for many of its residents, it is as good a time as any to recall how we've been conducting this ideological war.

So let's start with the end – with the *Gone With The Wind* epic of looting and anarchy with which the Iraqi population have chosen to celebrate our gift to them of "liberation" and "democracy". It started in Basra, of course, with our own shameful British response to the orgy of theft that took hold of the city. Our defence minister, Geoff Hoon, made some especially childish remarks about this disgraceful state of affairs, suggesting in the House of Commons that the people of Basra were merely "liberating" – that word again – their property from the Baath party. And the British Army enthusiastically endorsed this nonsense.

Even as tape of the pillage in Basra was being beamed around the world, there was Lieutenant Colonel Hugh Blackman of the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards cheerfully telling the BBC that "it's absolutely not my business to get in the way." But of course it *is* Colonel Blackman's business to "get in the way". Pillage merits a specific prevention clause in the Geneva Conventions, just as it did in the 1907 Hague Convention upon which the Geneva delegates based their "rules of war". "Pillage is prohibited," the 1949 Geneva Conventions say, and Colonel Blackman and Mr Hoon should glance at *Crimes of War*, published in conjunction with the City University Journalism Department – page 276 is the most dramatic – to understand what this means.

When an occupying power takes over another country's territory, it automatically becomes responsible for the protection of its civilians, their property and institutions. Thus the American troops in Nasiriyah became automatically responsible for the driver who was murdered for his car in the first day of that city's "liberation". The Americans in Baghdad were responsible for the German and Slovak embassies that were looted by hundreds of Iraqis on Thursday, and for the French Cultural Centre, which was attacked, and for the Central Bank of Iraq, which was torched yesterday afternoon.

But the British and Americans have simply discarded this notion, based though it is upon conventions and international law. And we journalists have allowed them to do so. We clapped our hands like children when the Americans "assisted" the Iraqis in bringing down the statue of Saddam Hussein in front of the television cameras this week, and yet we went on talking about the "liberation" of Baghdad as if the majority of civilians there were garlanding the soldiers with flowers instead of queuing with anxiety at checkpoints and

watching the looting of their capital.

We journalists have been co-operating, too, with a further collapse of morality in this war. Take, for example, the ruthless bombing of the residential Mansur area of Baghdad last week. The Anglo-American armies – or the "coalition", as the BBC still stubbornly and mendaciously calls the invaders – claimed they believed that Saddam and his two evil sons Qusay and Uday were present there. So they bombed the civilians of Mansur and killed at least 14 decent, innocent people, almost all of them – and this would obviously be of interest to the religious feelings of Messrs Bush and Blair – Christians.

Now one might have expected the BBC World Service Radio next morning to question whether the bombing of civilians did not constitute a bit of an immoral act, a war crime perhaps, however much we wanted to kill Saddam. Forget it. The presenter in London described the slaughter of these innocent civilians as "a new twist" in the war to target Saddam – as if it was quite in order to kill civilians, knowingly and in cold blood, in order to murder our most hated tyrant. The BBC's correspondent in Qatar – where the Centcom boys pompously boasted that they had "real-time" intelligence (subsequently proved to be untrue) that Saddam was present – used all the usual military jargon to justify the unjustifiable. The "coalition", he announced, knew it had "time-sensitive material" – ie that they wouldn't have time to know whether they were killing innocent human beings in the furtherance of their cause or not – and that this "actionable material" (again I quote this revolting BBC dispatch) was not "risk-free".

And then he went on to describe, without a moment of reflection, on the moral issues involved, how the Americans had used four 2,000lb "bunker-buster bombs to level the civilian homes". These are, of course, the very same pieces of ordnance that the same US air force used in their vain effort to kill Osama bin Laden in the Tora Bora mountains. So now we use them, knowingly, on the flimsy homes of civilians of Baghdad – folk who would otherwise be worthy of the "liberation" we wished to bestow upon them – in the hope that a gamble, a bit of faulty "intelligence" about Saddam, will pay off.

The Geneva Conventions have a lot to say about all this. They specifically refer to civilians as protected persons, as persons who must have the protection of a warring power even if they find themselves in the presence of armed antagonists. The same protection was demanded for southern Lebanese civilians when Israel launched its brutal "Grapes of Wrath" operation in 1996. When an Israeli pilot, for example, fired a US-made Hellfire missile into an ambulance, killing three children and two women, the Israelis claimed that a Hezbollah fighter had been in the same vehicle. The statement proved to be totally untrue. But Israel was rightly condemned for killing civilians in the hope of killing an enemy combatant. Now we are doing exactly the same. And Ariel Sharon must be pleased. No more namby-pamby western criticism of Israel after the bunker-busters have been dropped on Mansur.

More and more, we are committing these crimes. The mass slaughter of more than 400 civilians in the Amariyah air raid shelter in Baghdad in the 1991 Gulf War was carried out in the hope that it would kill Saddam. Why? Why cannot we abide by the rules of war we rightly demand that others should obey? Why do we journalists – yet again, war after war – connive in this immorality by turning a ruthless and cruel and illegal act into a "new twist" or into "time-sensitive material"?

Wars have a habit of turning normally sane people into cheerleaders, of transforming rational journalists into nasty little puffed-up fantasy colonels. But surely we should all carry the Geneva Conventions into war with us, along with that little book from the City University. For the only people to benefit from our own war crimes will be the next generation of

Saddam Husseins.

[go to top](#)

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US Accused Of War Crimes Against Journalists

By Julio Godoy Inter Press
4-12-3

PARIS (IPS) -- International journalists' organisations are accusing the U.S. government of committing war crimes in Iraq by intentionally firing at war correspondents.

The Paris-based journalists' organisation 'Reporters without Borders' (RSF, after its French name), called on the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission to investigate whether by attacking journalists in Iraq the U.S.-British coalition forces were not violating international humanitarian law.

"A media outlet cannot be a military target under international law and its equipment and installations are civilian property protected as such under the Geneva Conventions," said Reporters without Border secretary-general Robert Ménard.

"Only an objective and impartial enquiry can determine whether or not the Conventions have been violated," Ménard claimed.

It is the first time since its existence that the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission is being petitioned. Set up in 1991 under the First Additional Protocol of the Geneva Conventions, the Commission's task is investigating any alleged serious violation of international humanitarian law.

Similarly, the Brussels-based International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) called for an independent inquiry on the U.S. attacks against the Palestine Hotel and the bureaus of Al-Jazeera and Abu Dhabi television channels.

The New-York based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) also called the U.S. attacks against journalists in Iraq 'a violation of the Geneva Convention.'

In a letter to U.S. defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld, CPJ director Joel Simon wrote on Tuesday: "The Committee is gravely concerned by a series of U.S. military strikes against known media locations in Baghdad today that have left three journalists dead and several wounded."

"We believe these attacks violate the Geneva Conventions," Simon pointed out.

On Tuesday, U.S. troops attacked the Baghdad bureau of the Qatar-based Al Jazeera, killing one war correspondent, and wounding another. In another attack, a U.S. tank fired a shell at the Palestine Hotel in Baghdad, killing two other reporters and wounding three.

The hotel is well known as the unofficial Baghdadi centre of international press. A large number of foreign correspondents covering the war stay there.

Ménard, RSF's secretary-general, said that all independent evidence on the U.S. attacks against the hotel shows that the firing was deliberate.

"Film shot by the French television station France 3, and descriptions by journalists, prove that the neighbourhood around the hotel was very quiet at the hour of the attack, and that the U.S. tank crew took their time, waiting for a couple of minutes and adjusting its gun before opening fire," Ménard said.

"This evidence does not match the U.S. version of an attack in self-defence and we can only conclude that the U.S. Army deliberately and without warning targeted journalists," Ménard added.

Caroline Sines, a French television correspondent covering the war in Baghdad, confirmed Ménard's accusations against the U.S. troops.

"I was at the Palestine Hotel at the moment of the attack, around one pm, Baghdad time, and my crew filmed everything," Sines said. "Our films shows that the U.S. tank took its time at targeting the 14th floor of the hotel, where many journalists are hosted, at a moment of complete calm," Sines said.

Menard urged the U.S. forces to prove that the incident was not a deliberate attack to dissuade or prevent journalists from continuing to report on what is happening in Baghdad.

"We are appalled at what happened because it was known that journalists were working both at the Palestine Hotel as well at the Al-Jazeera bureau," Ménard pointed out.

One Al-Jazeera camera operator was also killed on Tuesday by an apparently intentional U.S. bombing of the pan-Arab TV station's offices elsewhere in Baghdad. The nearby premises of Abu Dhabi TV were also damaged by the bombing.

The Qatar-based television network recalled that prior to the conflict, it had provided the U.S. military authorities with the specific coordinates of its Baghdad offices. This information was confirmed by the Committee to Protect Journalists in the letter to Donald Rumsfeld.

"CPJ has seen a copy of Al-Jazeera's February letter to Pentagon

spokeswoman Victoria Clarke outlining these coordinates," Joel Simon wrote to Rumsfeld.

Simon called Rumsfeld "to launch an immediate and thorough investigation into these incidents and to make the findings public." The CPJ also recalled to the U.S. military authorities that more than 100 independent journalists continue to operate in Baghdad from both the Palestine and the nearby Sheraton hotels.

"The U.S. military has a clear obligation to avoid harming the correspondents while carrying out (war) operations," Simon said in his letter to Rumsfeld.

Aidan White, General Secretary of the International Federation of Journalists, said, "There is no doubt at all that these attacks could be targeting journalists. If so, they are grave and serious violations of international law."

"The bombing of hotels where journalists are staying and targeting of Arab media is particularly shocking events in a war which is being fought in the name of democracy," White said. "Those who are responsible must be brought to justice."

"The United Nations system and the international media community must be fully-engaged in finding out what happened in these cases and action must be taken to ensure it never happens again," White said. "We can expect denials of intent from the military, but what we really want is the truth."

The IFJ says that the global media community, including journalists, media organisations and press freedom campaigners, should join hands under the banner of the newly-formed International News Safety Institute to hold a complete and in depth inquiry.

The INSI is a coalition of more than 100 organisations campaigning for a global news safety programme.

The IFJ also condemned "what appears to be Iraqi tactics of using civilians and journalists as a 'human shield' against attack." "The Baghdad authorities are just as culpable as the U.S. with their reckless disregard for civilian lives," White said.

Both the IFJ and RSF recalled that Al Jazeera has become a frequent target of U.S. and British attacks in Iraq and in Afghanistan.

Earlier in the war in Iraq, four members of the pan-Arab television crew in the southern city of Basra came under gunfire from British tanks on March 29 as they were filming distribution of food by Iraqi government officials.

One of the station's cameramen went missing and was later found to have been held for 12 hours by U.S. troops. Al-Jazeera reporters were the only journalists in Basra at the time.

The Al-Jazeera offices in Kabul, Afghanistan, were also bombed by U.S. forces during the war against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in November 2001.

To have jurisdiction in a war, the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission has to be petitioned by one of the parties in the conflict or by one of the countries that have recognised its jurisdiction.

To conduct an investigation, all the belligerents must accept its authority. Among the countries involved in the Iraq war, only Australia and the United Kingdom have formally recognised it, allowing an investigation to go ahead as far as they are concerned.

Neither the United States nor Iraq have yet accepted the principle of such an enquiry.

Since the beginning of the Iraqi war on March 20, ten journalists have been killed by the conflicting parties, and two other died in war related accidents. At least eight other correspondents have been wounded. Two other reporters' whereabouts remain unknown.

"Patriotism means to stand by the country. It does not mean to stand by the President."

--Theodore Roosevelt

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Landschap

De obsessie van Arabische zenders met horrortafereilen is misschien niets anders dan een uiting van primitiviteit

Francisco van Jole

12-4-2003 *Colloquialisme*
Op een mooie zomerochtend in 1991, zeven maanden na de Iraakse nederlaag, stond op de buitenlandspagina een kort, onopvallend bericht. 'De Amerikaanse legerdivisie die bij het begin van de Golfoorlog door de frontlijnen van het Iraakse leger brak, heeft met tanks en bulldozers duizenden soldaten levend begraven in hun loopgraven.'
Twaalf jaar lang spookte die gruwelijkheid door mijn hoofd en soms haalde ik het aan als voorbeeld van hoe smerig een ogenschijnlijk schone mediaoorlog kan zijn. Want schoon was de eerste Golfoorlog. Er was geen lijf te zien op de tv-schermen. Wat we zagen, waren zwartwitbeelden van bovenaf. Van poppetjes die met op tijd weggenden als een bunkerbuster hun schuilplaats trof. Van een vrachtauto die juist de overkant van een brug haalde voor die verwoest werd. De eerste Golfoorlog was door de ogen

van CNN gezien vooraf de Oorlog van de Mazzelaars.
Dat was deze keer anders. Nu waren er de Arabische satellietzenders, het fameuze Al Jazeera voorop, die de wereld de harde werkelijkheid toonden: burger-slachtoffers. Sterker nog, ze leken daar geen genoeg van te kunnen krijgen. Liefst zoveel mogelijk en in zo gruwelijk mogelijke beelden.
Voor de onbevongen westerling, die zo'n afkeer heeft van bloed dat het zelfs in gewone slagerijen wordt weggepompd, lijkt dat een daad van verzet, een middel om de verschrikkingen van de oorlog in beeld te brengen. Al Jazeera als de *Guernica* van het televisiedom.
Zo werd het althans door de anti-oorlogsbeweging opgepikt. In het Amsterdamse debatcentrum De Balie verklaarde programmamaker Hans Otten van de VPRO dat Al Jazeera een 'villain van in-

formatie in een zee van leugens' is. 'Journalistiek kunnen ze ons nog een lesje leren.'
Het tonen van menselijk leed lijkt in die rol te passen. Terwijl westerse media niets zien anders dan de vijand gevat en vernietigd, of omdat het niet mag van de autoriteiten, jaagt de satelliet van Al Jazeera ons in met het beeld waar we zo bang voor zijn. Dat kan niet vaak genoeg gebeuren.
Maar toch is er iets vreemds met de obsessieve belangstelling voor burger-slachtoffers in de Arabische media. Het lijkt inderdaad een blik van compassie. Maar het maken van zoveel mogelijk burger-slachtoffers is nu juist een tactiek die de laatste jaren uitsluitend door moslimstrijders wordt toegepast. Terwijl westerse legers hun krijgsvrienden onder druk van de publieke opinie - lees televisiekijker - voortdurend aanpassen

om burgers te sparen, kunnen de moslims er maar geen genoeg van krijgen. Van het opblazen van een Jumbo boven Lockerbie tot de Twin Towers, van de slachtpartijen in Algerije tot de zelfmoordbommen in Tel Aviv en Bali. Altijd zijn burgers het doelwit en liefst zo veel en zo gruwelijk mogelijk.
De obsessie van Arabische zenders met horrortafereilen is misschien niets anders dan een uiting van primitiviteit, met zoals het genieten van een openbare executie. Een oerdrift waarvan we in onze wereld de laatste genetische sporen terugvinden in de programmering van zenders als SBS en in de populariteit van de videoreeks *Faces Of Death*, een hit in de videotheken.
Beelden van Iraakse soldaten die levend worden begraven, zouden in die kokerschermen erg populair zijn. Om te lachen of om zich te wettelen in het genot

van de verantwoordiging. De 18-jarige Amerikaanse soldaat Joe Queen, die met zijn hufloer de Iraakse soldaten onder het zand begraf en een onderscheiding ontving, verklaarde later 'Ik heb ervan genoten.' In een tv-documentaire van de Amerikaanse publieke zender PBS vertelde Queen dat hij het angste wit in de ogen van de vijand had kunnen zien voor hij ze bedroef.
Het is natuurlijk een vooroordeel, maar ik kan niet anders dan Joe Queen voor me zien als een man die 's avonds een six-pack opentrekt en onderuitgezakt afstemt op de Amerikaanse versie van *Stem van Nederland*.
Joe Queen is de verpersoonlijking van wat we verafschuwen, de gewetenloze soldaat die zonder maskeren duizenden over de kling jaagt. Zijn woorden en daden worden nog steeds aangehaald, recentelijk in de Britse krant *The Guardian*

door Pulitzer-prijswinnaar Patrick Sloyan in een anti-oorlogsbetog.
Toen ik het verhaal aasacht, ontdek ik heette hij beetje dat hoogstwaarschijnlijk nooit duizenden soldaten leven zijn begraven. Ja, de methode is ooit toegepast om met een minimum aan verliezen de Iraakse linies te doorbreken, maar de hoogste schattingen spreken van honderden slachtoffers, het Amerikaanse leger van 150 en de Iraakse zelf hebben veertig lijken opgegraven.
Het begon me te dagen dat zelfs de woorden van Joe Queen uit hun verband kunnen zijn gerukt. Dat hij refereerde aan zijn totale oorlogservaring in plaats van deze enkele actie. De twijfel maakte echter al snel plaats voor boosheid, omdat het voelde alsof ik werd beroofd van mijn jarenlange verantwoordiging. Er schuilt meer Al-Jazeera-kijker in me dan ik wil toegeven.

Ziekenhuisterrein wordt tot massagraf

12-4-2003 *Colloquialisme*
Bagdad is in de greep van de chaos. Ziekenbroeders schouderden de kalasjnikov om plunderaars te verjagen, kruipende peuters worden aan stukken gereten door niet-ontploffte clusterbommen. Het ziekenhuis is veranderd in een begraafplaats - in de hel.
The Guardian
Suzanne Goldenberg
BAGDAD
Bij de vuilnisbakken ligt een man, een bloedvlek breidt zich langzaam uit over zijn gervuile hemd. Een ziekenbroeder, die bezig is opgezwollen lijken te begraven in

een grote kuil op het ziekenhuisterrein, prevelt een islamitisch gebed. 'Dood, hij is dood, wat kan ik nog doen?' zegt hij en neemt zijn spade weer op. Maar de man ademt nog, moeizaam rochelend, en hij voelt nog warm aan.
Achtentveertig uur na de bevrijding van Bagdad door Amerikaanse troepen - zoals president Bush het zou noemen - verkeert de Iraakse hoofdstad vrijdag in de greep van de chaos. Mannen met kalasjnikovs sleuren bestuurders uit hun auto's, baby's worden gedood door clusterbommen, en ziekenhuizen die tijdens alle bombardementen hebben doorgevoerd lijken wel de hel.
De vloeren zijn besmeurd met geronnen bloed, de ziekenhuizen stinken naar rottend vlees. De gewonden liggen op smerige lakens in de hal, schreeuwend van pijn,

smekend om pijnstillers. Operatiebroeders schouderden kalasjnikovs om zich de plunderaars van het lijf te houden. Ambulancepersoneel zet de achtervolging in om de gestolen medicijnen en operatie-instrumenten terug te halen.
Het is niet precies deze anarchie: bij de Amerikaanse soldaten die, als de dood voor zelfmoordaanrassen, het vuur openen op auto's met burgers; bij de verzetsaanhouders van Saddam-aanhangers; bij de tientallen gewapende Iraakse die rovend door Bagdad trekken; of bij de niet-ontploffte bommen waarmee de straten bezaaid liggen.
Maar voor de Iraakse staat van wie de ware schuldigen zijn: de Amerikanen, die het bewind van Saddam Hussein ten val hebben gebracht voordat ze zelf orde konden scheppen in Bagdad.

Maar in het Yarmuk-ziekenhuis hebben ze geen tijd voor woe-de. Daar moeten opnieuw 16 rottende lijken worden begraven, na de 20 die donderdag al onder de aarde zijn gestopt. Sommigen waren Arabische vrijwilligers uit Syrië en Libanon. Anderen waren mensen die vastzaten in een van de verzetshaarden in de stad. Sommigen waren zo deertlijk verbrand dat de artsen geen hoop koesterden ooit hun identiteit vast te stellen.
Er treft het gewervuur, maar de begrafenisploeg werkt door. Dan klinkt de dreun van een Amerikaanse tankgranaat en de bewakers van het ziekenhuis - buurtbewoners met hun kalasjnikovs - komen het terrein oprompen. Een jonge man komt schreeuwend aanlopen, de bebloede handen in de lucht. Een auto met twee lekke

banden hobbelt achter hem aan. Er zit een hele familie in, met een dode baby. Ze heette Rawand en was negen maanden oud.
Het gezin was juist voor het eerst naar huis teruggekeerd en Rawand kroop naar een ovaal ding dat op de grond lag. Het was een clusterbom, die ontplofte. Het kind was meteen dood. Haar moeder en twee neefjes raakten gewond. De enige arts die dienst doet bij het Yarmuk-ziekenhuis lant de begrafenisploeg in de steek en probeert de gewonden te helpen. Rawands vader is ontrouwbare. 'Ik ga Amerika vermoorden - niet vandaag, maar over tien jaar', zweert hij.
De adem van de man bij de vuilnisbakken is nauwelijks meer hoorbaar. De arts vindt eindelijk tijd voor hem en geeft hem een infuus.



ERGENS IN IRAK - Een gewonde Iraakse smeekt de Amerikanen om zijn vrijlating zodat hij zijn familie kan zien. (Foto Reuters/Damir Sagol)



Dagboek uit Bagdad, 13 april, 17.30u: Dr. Harrie Dewitte uit Amman en Dr. Geert Van Moorter uit Bagdad

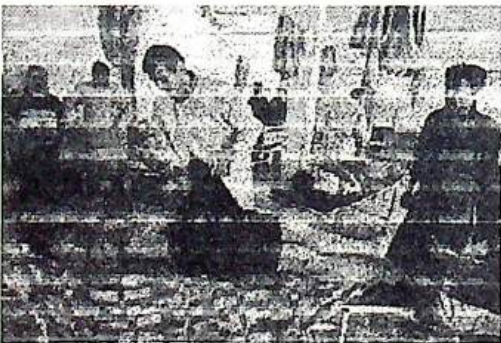
"Sinds de 'bevrijding' is er geen bevoorrading met geneesmiddelen meer"

Bert De Belder



Twee artsen van het Medical Team van Geneeskunde voor de Derde Wereld in Irak zijn op de terugweg. Het gaat om Dr. Harrie Dewitte en Dr. Colette Moulaert. Vanochtend om 6.30 u zijn ze met een konvooi van de BBC en Reuters vanuit Bagdad meegereisd naar Amman, waar ze rond 17 u aankwamen. Ze vergezelden de gewonde Britse cameraman, Paul Pasquale, die na de Amerikaanse beschieting van het Palestine Hotel in Bagdad door Dr. Geert Van Moorter was verzorgd.

Intussen hebben Dr. Claire Geraets en Dr. Geert Van Moorter in Bagdad verschillende ziekenhuizen bezocht. Het Al-Kindi-ziekenhuis wordt nu beschermd door buurtbewoners. Die pikken de plunderingen niet, begrijpen niet waarom de sociale infrastructuur wordt gestroopt. "Dit was allemaal, steen voor steen, door onze mensen opgebouwd", jammeren ze. De enorme pakhuizen van het ministerie van Volksgezondheid (10.000 m²) staan er helemaal onbeschermd bij, vlakbij de leeggeroofde Franse ambassade. De koelgeneratoren zijn al gestolen, de juiste bewaartemperatuur van de medicamenten en vaccins is niet meer verzekerd. "Alleen het ministerie van Olie beschermen de Amerikanen", stelt Geert wrang vast.



In het Al-Anour-hospitaal, waar Geert ging helpen na de beruchte bominslag op een markt, meldde Dr. Hakim Razuqi fier dat zijn ziekenhuis heel de tijd was opengebleven, zij het soms slechts met 30% van de staf. Veel personeel geraakte immers de controleposten van de Amerikaanse militairen niet voorbij. Dr. Razuqi stelt dat er vooral tekorten zijn van water, elektriciteit en zuurstof. Tot 8 april kreeg het ziekenhuis nog stipt geneesmiddelen van het goed functionerende ministerie van Volksgezondheid. "Sinds de 'bevrijding' is alle bevoorrading stilgevallen", verzucht de dokter. Vandaag

komen er nog steeds gewonden binnen, een dertigtal zelfs. De meesten met vuile wonden, al dagen oud. Pas nu durven of kunnen ze naar het ziekenhuis komen. Sommigen werd de vorige dagen ook de doorgang geweigerd door de VS-militairen.

Dr. Ahmed Sudad woont in de buurt en komt een handje toesteken in het ziekenhuis. "Hij vertelde dat kinderen her en der een soort ijzeren driehoekjes vinden", zegt Geert, "met een witte stof omkleed. Een soort ballon, soms in de vorm van een bloem. Bij aanraking ontploffen ze en slaan ze lelijke wonden. Het zouden mini-bommetjes uit clusterbommen kunnen zijn. De



kleine Mohamed, 4 jaar, is op die manier gewond geraakt. Ik gaf enkele patiëntjes kindertekeningen voor de vrede uit België. Ze waren er blij mee. Voor Ali, een jongetje van 7, kon niets meer helpen. Terwijl wij erbij stonden, overleed het kind aan de verwondingen die hij opliep toen hij op een dergelijk explosief trapte. Het huilen van zijn moeder in de gang was hartverscheurend. Een 'propere oorlog' was dit toch?!"

Terug in het hotel vond Dr. Van Moorter een briefje onder de deur, van de tandarts Dr. Al-Rahmani, wiens ziek kind hij eerder ontmoette. Het jongetje leidt aan hemofilie, een bloederziekte, en heeft dringend nood

aan het medicament Factor VIII. "De Amerikanen en de humanitaire organisaties kunnen hier nu zoveel gerief aanvliegen", zegt Dr. Van Moorter. "Ik ga eisen dat ze de levensreddende Factor VIII ook bezorgen, anders sterft het kind."

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Monday, 14 April, 2003, 14:55 GMT 15:55 UK

US rejects Iraq DU clean-up

By Alex Kirby

BBC News Online environment correspondent

The US says it has no plans to remove the debris left over from depleted uranium (DU) weapons it is using in Iraq.

- DU shells can go straight through the side of a tank
- US and British tanks use DU shells and armour

It says no clean-up is needed, because research shows DU has no long-term effects.

It says a 1990 study suggesting health risks to local people and veterans is out of date.

A United Nations study found DU contaminating air and water seven years after it was used.

DU, left over after natural uranium has been enriched, is 1.7 times denser than lead, and very effective for punching through armoured vehicles.

When a weapon with a DU tip or core strikes a solid object, like the side of a tank, it goes straight through before erupting in a burning cloud of vapour. This settles as chemically poisonous and radioactive dust.

Risk studies

Both the US and the UK acknowledge the dust can be dangerous if inhaled, though they say the danger is short-lived, localised, and much more likely to lead to chemical poisoning than to irradiation.

"One thing we've found in these various studies is that there are no long-term effects from DU"

Lieutenant-Colonel David Lapan, Pentagon spokesman

But a study prepared for the US Army in July 1990, a month before Iraq invaded Kuwait, says: "The health risks associated with internal and external DU exposure during combat conditions are certainly far less than other combat-related risks."

"Following combat, however, the condition of the battlefield and the long-term health risks to natives and combat veterans may become issues in the acceptability of the continued use of DU."

A Pentagon spokesman, Lieutenant-Colonel David Lapan, told BBC News Online: "Since then there've been a number of studies - by the UK's Royal Society and the World Health Organisation, for example - into the health risks of DU, or the lack of them."

"It's fair to say the 1990 study has been overtaken by them. One thing we've found in these various studies is that there are no long-term effects from DU."

"And given that, I don't believe we have any plans for a DU clean-up in Iraq."

Part of the armoury

The UN Environment Programme study, published in March 2003, found DU in air and groundwater in Bosnia-Herzegovina seven years after the weapons were fired.

The UN says the existing data suggest it is "highly unlikely" DU could be linked to any of the health problems reported.

But it recommends collecting DU fragments, covering contaminated points with asphalt or clean soil, and keeping records of contaminated sites.

Reports from Baghdad speak of repeated attacks by US aircraft carrying DU weapons on high-rise buildings in the city centre.

The UK says: "British forces on deployment to the Gulf have DU munitions available as part of their armoury, and will use them if necessary." It will not confirm they have used them.

Many veterans from the Gulf and Kosovo wars believe DU has made them seriously ill.

One UK Gulf veteran is Ray Bristow, a former marathon runner.

In 1999 he told the BBC: "I gradually noticed that every time I went out for a run my distance got shorter and shorter, my recovery time longer and longer."

"Now, on my good days, I get around quite adequately with a walking stick, so long as it's short distances. Any further, and I need to be pushed in a wheelchair."

Ray Bristow was tested in Canada for DU. He is open-minded about its role in his condition.

But he says: "I remained in Saudi Arabia throughout the war. I never once went into Iraq or Kuwait, where these munitions were used."

"But the tests showed, in layman's terms, that I have been exposed to over 100 times an individual's safe annual exposure to depleted uranium."

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TV1 Koppen 15 april: 24 uur op pad met Belgische 'ER' dokters Dewitte en Van Moorter in Bagdad

De dokters en de dood.



Een chirurg die met een kalasjnikov plunders uit zijn operatiekwartier en ziekenzaal verjaagt: het is maar één van de hallucinante beelden die ons de jongste dagen vanuit het 'bevrijde' Bagdad bereiken. Sinds de intocht van de Amerikaanse en Britse strijdkrachten heerst er anarchie en chaos. In al dat tumult proberen de twee Belgische artsen Harrie Dewitte en Geert Van Moorter van Geneeskunde voor de Derde Wereld zoveel mogelijk oorlogsslachtoffers in de Iraakse hoofdstad hulp te bieden. Journalist Rudi Vranckx trok voor Koppen 24 uur lang met

hen op. "Veel dokterswerk zie je ons niet doen", zeggen de Belgische artsen, "we doen hier veeleer aan stervensbegeleiding. Omdat we niet meer kunnen doen. Er is te weinig medisch materiaal voorhanden."



"De taferelen die ik hier te zien heb gekregen doen denken aan de strafste scènes uit Amerikaanse ziekenhuisseries zoals 'E.R.', zegt Rudi Vranckx. "In de ziekenhuizen is er zo mogelijk nog meer chaos dan op straat. Alle bedden zijn bezet, er is een nijpend tekort aan artsen en medisch materiaal, gewonden worden van overal binnengebracht en moeten vaak uren wachten tot iemand zich over hen kan ontfemen." En Saddam en co mogen dan al uit Bagdad zijn verjaagd, dat maakt de stad niet veilig. Zo zijn er nog regelmatig vuurgevechten.

Volgens dokter Harrie Dewitte is de situatie ronduit dramatisch. "Wat hebben de Amerikanen hier verdomme uitgestoken", zegt hij. Harrie is normaliter huisarts in België, wat hij in Bagdad te zien krijgt, maakt diepe indruk. "Als je dagenlang tussen de kermende gewonden en de doden rondloopt, slaan je gevoelens tilt." In het Saddam ziekenhuis moet dokter Dewitte toekijken hoe zijn Iraakse collega's een gewonde zwangere vrouw niet meer kunnen redden. Ook haar baby sterft. "Dat betekent oorlog voor de mensen: de dood", aldus dokter Dewitte. "Door het gebrek aan water en elektriciteit en omdat zowat elk ziekenhuis leeggeroofd is door plunders."



Dokters Dewitte en Van Moorter ergeren zich aan de houding van de Amerikaanse troepen: "Zij kijken meestal gewoon toe, ze laten de plunders begaan en de gewonden creperen. Dat kan toch niet!" Dokter Van Moorter leest een Amerikaanse soldaat daarover de les. Al wat de soldaat

kan antwoorden is: "We zijn hier alleen maar om het regime te elimineren. De burgers beschermen en plunderingen tegengaan, dat is niet onze opdracht, daar weet ik niets van."

Elke menselijkheid lijkt dus zoek in Bagdad. De Belgische dokters ondervonden het aan den lijve, enkele dagen geleden. "We reden met een ambulance met twee zwaargewonden door de stad en werden onder vuur genomen door de Amerikanen", aldus dokter Van Moorter. "En dat op klaarlichte dag, zonder dat er een stopteken of waarschuwing werd gegeven. De ambulancier ligt nu zelf gewond in 't ziekenhuis, de twee gewonden zijn dood."

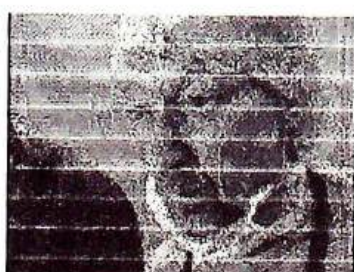


U kan het volledige programma "Koppen" bekijken door op één van de onderstaande links te klikken.

Download attached file: **150403.dokters_in_bagdad_irak.c50.avi (mimetype: video/x-msvideo)** (matige compressie)

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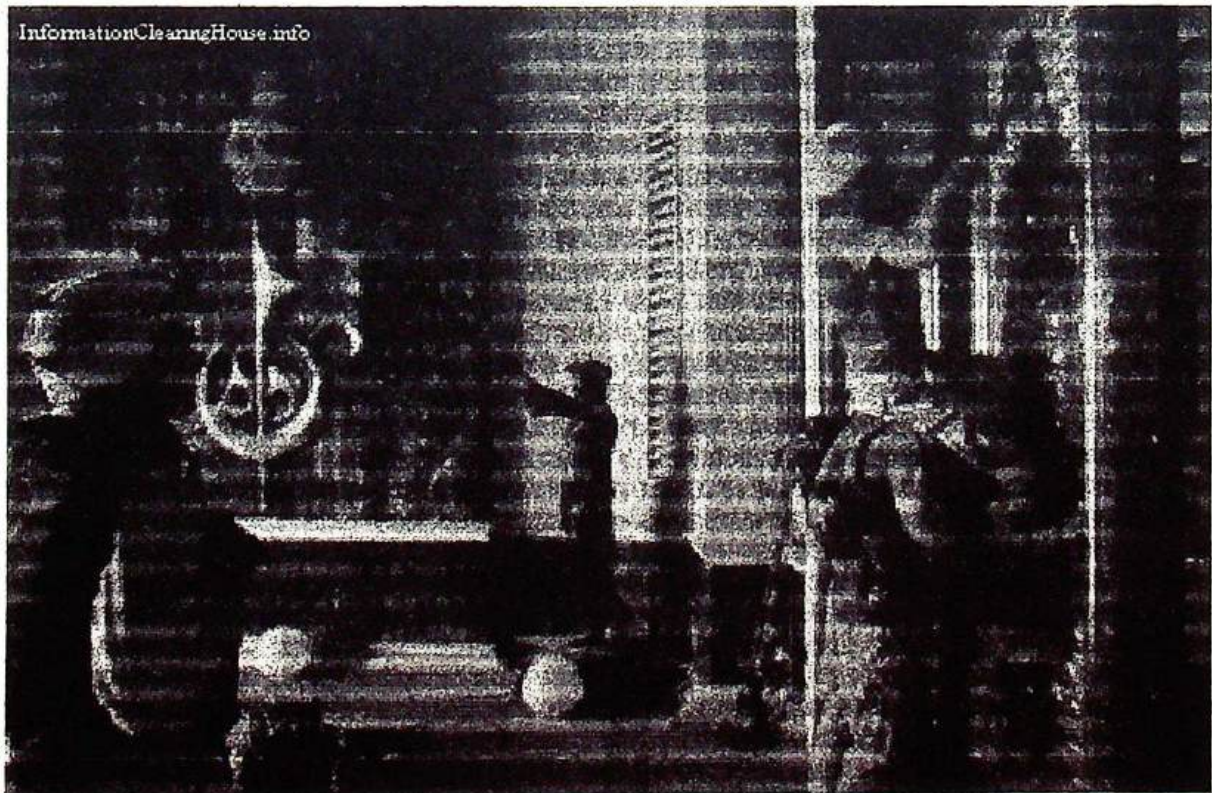


Rense.com

Are These US Marines Looting/Liberating Iraqi Gold? Or Just Fixing Saddam's Door?

From InformationClearinghouse.info
4-16-3

The picture shows what would appear to be, US Marines stripping gold plating from a door located in one of Saddam's palaces. Another possible explanation is that these boys found the door was not working properly and are attempting to fix its hinges...



<<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/images/JOYOFX%7E1.gif>>

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Dringende verklaring en oproep van Geneeskunde voor de Derde Wereld

De bezettende macht is verantwoordelijk voor de zware humanitaire crisis in Irak

Bagdad, 16 april 2003

Als dokters kunnen wij niet zwijgen over het enorme lijden van de Iraakse burgerbevolking ten gevolge van de Amerikaans-Britse bombardementen, invasie en bezetting.

Wij hebben gezien hoe honderden burgers, waaronder veel kinderen, gewond en gedood werden, dikwijls door verboden wapens zoals clusterbommen. We hebben gezien hoe ziekenwagens en burgervoertuigen door VS-troepen werden beschoten. We hebben ervaren hoe moeilijk patiënten en gezondheidswerkers het hebben om Amerikaanse militaire controleposten te kunnen passeren en de gezondheidsdiensten te bereiken.

Wij zien nu hoe de Iraakse ziekenhuizen en andere medische diensten worden geplunderd en verwaarloosd. Veel Iraakse gezondheidswerkers kunnen niet meer gaan werken. Zonder elektriciteit, watervoorziening en bevoorrading met geneesmiddelen en medisch materiaal liggen veel patiënten gewoon te sterven.

Als dokter en als mens kunnen wij deze situatie niet langer verdragen. Daarom lanceren wij de volgende verklaring en oproep:

1. De huidige humanitaire catastrofe valt volledig en uitsluitend onder de verantwoordelijkheid van de Amerikaanse en Britse autoriteiten, die een agressieoorlog zijn begonnen tegen Irak, die illegaal is volgens het internationaal recht.
2. In de loop van die oorlog hebben de Amerikaanse en Britse troepen het internationaal humanitair recht op grove en herhaalde wijze geschonden, met name Artikels 10, 12, 15, 21, 35, 36, 41, 45, 47, 48 and 51 van Protocol I van de Conventies van Genève.
3. Een echte en duurzame oplossing voor de humanitaire catastrofe in Irak kan er maar komen na de onmiddellijke en onvoorwaardelijke terugtrekking van alle Amerikaanse en Britse troepen en het volledig herstel van de soevereiniteit van Irak, over het gehele Iraakse grondgebied en op basis van de vrije keuze van de Irakezen zelf.
4. De Verenigde Staten en Groot-Brittannië moeten betalen voor alle directe en indirecte schade en voor alle lijden die zij met hun oorlog hebben toegebracht aan het Iraakse volk, de Iraakse maatschappij, het land zelf en zijn infrastructuur.
5. In tussentijd hebben de Verenigde Staten en Groot-Brittannië, als bezettende macht, de verplichting om te verzekeren dat de bevolking voldoende voedsel wordt met voedsel en medicamenten (Artikel 55 van de Vierde Conventie van Genève). Ze hebben eveneens de plicht om, in samenwerking met nationale en lokale autoriteiten, de medische diensten en de hospitalen, de volksgezondheid en de hygiëne in bezet gebied te verzekeren. Zij moeten het medisch personeel toelaten hun job uit te voeren (Artikel 56 van de Vierde Conventie van Genève).
6. Wij roepen alle relevante agentschappen van de Verenigde Naties, zoals het VN-Voedselprogramma, Unicef en de Wereldgezondheidsorganisatie, op om onmiddellijk hun humanitaire operaties in Irak te hervatten. Een brandweerman wacht niet tot het huis helemaal is uitgebrand, maar moet risico's nemen om het vuur te bedwingen en de volledige instorting van het gebouw te voorkomen.
7. Wij steunen alle spontane en georganiseerde initiatieven van de Iraakse bevolking om de Amerikaans-Britse bezetting aan te klagen en te eisen dat de Amerikaanse en Britse autoriteiten hun plicht vervullen zoals vastgelegd in het internationaal humanitair recht.
8. Wij steunen elk initiatief om VS-generaal Tommy Franks en andere Amerikaanse en Britse militaire autoriteiten en manschappen voor het gerecht te brengen wegens schendingen van het internationaal humanitair recht. Op vraag van directe slachtoffers van zulke schendingen - patiënten en ziekenhuispersoneel - hebben wij de bekende Belgische mensenrechtenadvocaten Mr. Jan Fermon en Mr. Georges-Henri Beauthier gevraagd om de concrete opties te onderzoeken om VS-generaal Franks voor een Belgische rechtbank te dagen wegens oorlogsmisdaden, op basis van de Belgische 'genocidewet'.

Dr. Geert Van Moorter, urgentie-arts, in Bagdad sinds 16 maart
Dr. Colette Moulaert, kinderarts, in Bagdad van 16 maart tot 13 april
Dr. Harrie Dewitte, huisarts, in Bagdad van 6 tot 13 april
Dr. Claire Geraets, huisarts, in Bagdad sinds 6 april
Dr. Bert De Belder, coördinator van Geneeskunde voor de Derde Wereld, Brussel

GEWONDE ALI WORDT BEHANDELD IN KOEWEIT



16-4-2003
• De in levensgevaar verkerende 12-jarige Ali Ismail Abbas, die bij een bombardement op Bagdad beide armen verloor en ernstige brandwonden opliep, is door een Amerikaanse helikopter naar Koeweit overgevlogen. Artsen van het Ibn Sina Hospitaal in Koeweit-Stad staan klaar om hem te helpen.

De dramatische foto van de gewonde Ali, die bij het bombardement zijn vader, moeder en acht broers en zusjes verloor, zorgde voor emotionele reacties in de hele wereld. De schatrijke Indiase prinses van Jaipur, Maharani Gayatri Devi, wil alle kosten betalen.

FOTO: REUTERS

Tien doden na rellen Mosul

ROTTERDAM, 16 APRIL. Amerikaanse militairen hebben volgens ooggetuigen gisteren in de Noord-Iraakse stad Mosul zeker tien personen gedood en tientallen gewond, toen zij het vuur openden op een demonstrerende menigte. De Amerikanen ontkennen op de menigte te hebben gevuurd.

De schietpartij had plaats in het centrum van de stad tijdens een speech van Mashaan al-Juburi, een controversiële oppositieleider. Toen Juburi de komst van de Amerikanen verwelkomde, bekogelden inwoners hem met stenen en probeerden zijn auto in brand te steken.

In de daaropvolgende chaos zouden de Amerikanen zijn beschoten, zo zegt het Centrale Commando in Qatar. De soldaten vuurden waarschuwingsschoten af, en toen de menigte niet wegging maar aanzwol tot 3.000 man, zouden zij gericht op de schutters hebben geschoten.

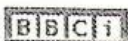
Gewonde Irakezen zeiden echter tegen de *New York Times* dat de Amerikanen hun zelfbeheersing verloren en op de menigte begonnen te schieten. Een verslaggever van AFP telde in een lokaal ziekenhuis zeker vier doden en tien-

tallen gewonden, van wie enkelen niet schotwonden.

In een poging de rust te herstellen in de stad met 1,7 miljoen inwoners, riep de Amerikaanse bevelhebber in de stad, kolonel Robert Waltemeyer, de hulp in van drie gevechtsvliegtuigen die de hele nacht boven de stad patrouilleerden. Waltemeyer zei zo snel mogelijk een nieuw bestuur te zullen installeren.

Amerikaanse soldaten zeiden tegen de *New York Times* dat de inwoners de actie verkeerd hebben begrepen. „We werden beschoten en moesten wel terugvuren”, aldus een soldaat, die anoniem wilde blijven. Ook de komst van de vliegtuigen zijn door de Irakezen verkeerd begrepen, zo zei hij. „Die zijn nodig om de menigte te verspreiden. Het is machtsvertoon, maar de mensen begrijpen het niet. Ze zijn niet dankbaar.”

De inwoners van Mosul keren zich meer en meer tegen de Amerikaanse aanwezigheid in de stad, zo zeggen verslaggevers. Veel Irakezen zouden, in reactie op de Amerikaanse vlaggen op de patrouillewagens van de Amerikanen, Iraakse vlaggen hebben uitgestoken.



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Child casualties 'fill Iraq hospitals'

The appalling injuries suffered by Ali Ismail Abbas are not unique, says an aid worker who has visited Mosul's hospitals.

The 12-year-old lost both his arms and received extensive burns during a US bombing raid.

He has been airlifted to a hospital in Kuwait for emergency surgery.

However, Brendan Paddy of the aid charity Save the Children, who is working in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, says that he has seen dozens of similarly injured children whose plight has not attracted similar attention.

He said that the injury toll was reducing experienced medical staff to tears.

He told the BBC: "In the hospitals the doctors have struggled very bravely to keep things running during the bombing.

"They were having to do amputations on children all the time.

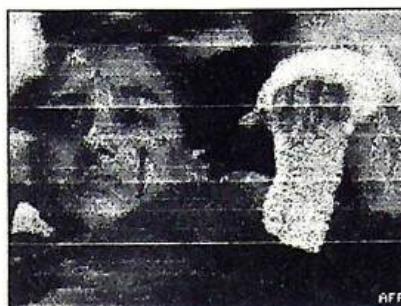
"Every day they are having to confront that kind of thing - they were broken up about it when they were speaking to us.

"These were medical professionals on the verge of tears. Unfortunately Ali is by no means unique."

He said that staff had been fighting off looters "with their bare hands".

"The looting and the burning have been pretty extensive so there have been problems with water supply."

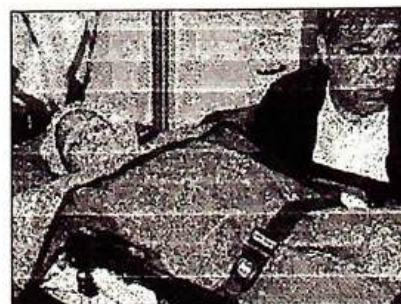
Save the Children managed to provide money to one hospital so that staff could go out and buy fresh vegetables - patients



Ahmed Deyari, an injured 14-year-old in a Mosul hospital

“Unfortunately Ali is by no means unique”

Brendan Paddy, Save The Children



Ali Ismail Abbas was flown to Kuwait for treatment

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had been living on nothing but rice for weeks.

However, he said that the situation in the city remained dangerous for aid workers.

"We're putting potentially ourselves at risk if we go in."

Save the Children has been based in northern Iraq for 12 years and has 60 Kurdish staff who have worked on throughout the conflict.

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US Bars Media From Iraqi Anti-US Protests

The Age - Australia
4-17-3

BAGHDAD -- US forces yesterday tried to stop the media from covering a third day of anti-American protests by Iraqis outside a hotel housing a US operations base, according to a reporter at the scene.

Up to 300 Iraqis gathered outside the Palestine Hotel to express rage at what they said was the US failure to restore order after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime.

For the first time, visibly angered US military officials sought to distance the media from the protest, moving reporters and cameras about 30 metres from the barbed-wired entrance to the hotel.

"We want you to pull back to the back of the hotel because they (the Iraqis) are only performing because the media are here," said a marines colonel who would not give his first name or title.

The crowd later moved to the nearby square where a statue of Saddam was toppled last Wednesday, signaling the end of the regime. The Iraqis chanted: "No, no, USA."

Tension has been rising in front of the hotel, where Iraqis protest against a lack of police protection, water, electricity and other basic services.

As the protest grew more vocal, a marines corporal held an impromptu briefing for a few reporters about progress in bringing Iraq back to normal.

Corporal John Hoellwarth said the US forces planned to boost joint police patrols, bring more hospitals back into service and restore power to parts of Baghdad within 72 hours

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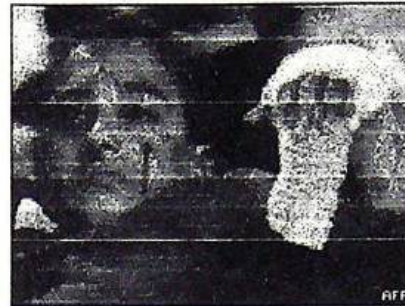
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Brendan Paddy, Save The Children



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Een moeder zit bij haar gewonde, vijfjarige zoon in een ziekenhuis in Bagdad. Het kind raakte gewond toen een clusterbom, die hij en zijn broertjes in de tain hadden gevonden, ontplofte.

FOTO

Kinderen raken nog elke dag gewond

Hanan en haar zus waren schapen aan het hoeden toen ze op een niet-ontploffte mijn liepen. Zomaar een voorval dat dokter Al Taye aanhaalt. De oorlog is voorbij, maar de ziekenhuizen stromen vol met gewonde kinderen. Medicijnen en voedsel zijn schaars.

Van onze correspondent Ferry Biedermann BAGDAD

Hanan Efen is een van de meest recente jonge slachtoffers van de oorlog in Irak. Het 10-jarige meisje met warrig zwart haar en diepbruine ogen ligt aan een infuus op de kinderafdeling van het ziekenhuis Medische Stad, het voer-voespel Saddam is, net als bij veel van de openbare instanties in Irak, weggehaald.

De armen van de eerste hulp en de pediatrie afdelingen van de ziekenhuizen in Bagdad krijgen de laatste dagen steeds meer kinderen binnen die net als Hanan op

niet ontplofte granaten, mijnen of bommen zijn gelopen, of er mee hebben gespeeld. En na alles wat de ziekenhuizen doorgemaakt hebben tijdens de oorlog zijn ze nauwelijks berekend op de nieuwe toestroom.

Het linkerbeen van Hanan is ontzwaaid, bij de voet is het verband helemaal rood. 'We moeten de voet amputeren', is het oordeel van dokter Bassim Al Taye. Ze is ook gewond in de buik. 'Veel inwendige verwondingen, perforaties', zegt de dokter. 'We kunnen haar nu niet opereren, misschien later als ze stabiel is.'

De oudere zus van Hanan werd bij dezelfde explosie gedood. Ze waren de schapen aan het hoeden in een veld bij het dorpje Youssefiyah net buiten Bagdad, vertelt hun oom, Saad Ali, die voor de meisjes zorgde. Hij zit intussentijd naast het wat vervuilde bed van zijn nichtje en probeert haar wat lucht toe te waaien in de bedompte ziekenhuissatmosfeer.

De golf van gewonde kinderen valt samen met een toename van anderen met brandwonden. 'Veel mensen tappen benzine af uit allerlei tanks nu brandstof schaars wordt', legt dokter Ali Al-Azawi

uit. Hij is het hoofd van de eerste hulp. 'Ze zijn niet voorzichtig en steken bijvoorbeeld een sigaret op en - woesh!'

De ziekenhuizen hebben nog wel medische voorraden maar spellen beginnen op te raken. 'Wat we nodig hebben zijn antibiotica, anti-septische middelen en pijnstillers', zegt de arts.

Luchtafweer Irak stond opgesteld in een school

Wat de ziekenhuizen het meest nodig hebben zijn doktoren en andere personeel. Veel medewerkers bleven weg vlak na de val van Bagdad vanwege gevechten en de plunderingen. Slechts drie van onze vijftien vragen zijn open', zegt Al-Azawi, 'er is onvoldoende personeel.'

Vanwege het gebrek aan bedden worden veel mensen naar huis gestuurd, zelfs als ze nog niet goed aan toe zijn. Ali Efen is door zijn been geschoten, door plunderaars

die zijn auto wilden. Een kogel van een kalasnikov zit nog in zijn bot. 'Het doet ontzettend pijn maar in vijf dagen heb ik maar één injectie gekregen.'

De meeste gewonden van de Amerikaanse bombardementen zijn vlak na de val van de stad naar huis gestuurd. Het ziekenhuis was te gevaarlijk vanwege plunderaars.

De 15-jarige Mustafa Zeyara kon echter niet worden verplaatst. De dokter weet niet of hij het zal halen. Mustafa is wel bij bewustzijn en zit rechtop in bed. Hij houdt van voetballen en wil later dokter worden. 'Om mensen beter te maken', vertelt hij opgewekt.

Hij raakte ernstig gewond in zijn buik toen een Amerikaanse raket een Iraakse luchtafweer-batterij raakte. De familie wil het niet zeggen maar de arts vertelt dat de batterij stond opgesteld in een school in de buurt.

Het Internationale Rode Kruis is de hele oorlog in Bagdad gebleven en probeert te helpen, zo goed en zo kwaad als dat kan. Woordvoerder Roland Huguennin zegt dat er nog niet zoveel een gebrek is aan medicijnen afwel aan doktoren en aan veiligheid.

De medicijnen worden uitgeleend voor zover de ziekenhuizen ze nodig hebben. 'Er is veel opgepakt. Tijdens de gevechten kwamen er op een gegeven moment honderd patiënten per uur binnen, toen ging het snel met de voorraad.' Het Rode Kruis vult die nu aan.

Huguennin vindt dat eerst de elektriciteit hersteld moet worden. De watervoorziening is ook heel belangrijk, maar daarmee wordt al veel vooruitgang geboekt. Misschien dat heel Bagdad tegen het eind van de week weer schoon water heeft, zegt hij.

Zijn grootste zorg is de voedselsituatie. 'De mensen hadden voor drie à vier weken voorraden aangelegd, die raken nu op.' Huguennin hoopt dat de VN snel de voedseldistributie op gang kan brengen. '60 Procent van de bevolking was sowieso al afhankelijk van voedselhulp.'

Het Rode Kruis brengt dit week-einde waarschijnlijk de eerste hulpverleners terug die geëvacueerd waren. De VN hebben eigen inschattingen van de veiligheid, zegt hij, maar hij lijkt te vinden dat het de hoogste tijd is om het werk te hervatten.

YOU P



14-4-2003 Arm jongetje

De hele week sluipst Ali door mijn hoofd. Niet Ali Chemicali, maar dat arme Iraakse jongetje. Arm is een verkeerd woord. Armloos is beter. Armloos en verbrand. Het herstel van brandwonden gaat meestal gepaard met enorme jeuk. Wie krabt het onschuldige kereltje? Het jochie dat bij het bombardement zijn ouders verloor. En niet alleen zijn ouders. Ook zijn broers en zusjes. Als er deze week geen hulp kwam, dan zou hij sterven. Ik hoopte voor het joch dat er geen hulp kwam. Maar God is wreed en hielp. Allah regelde dat hij naar Koeweit mocht. Daar ligt hij nu. Symbool van de Tweede Golfoorlog. Hij is de opvolger van het Vietnamese napalmmeisje. Hij hoeft nooit te klappen voor de Amerikanen. Meisje omhelzen lukt ook niet. Masturberen? Kansloos. Liefte? Nee dus. Zelfs zelfmoord kan hij niet zelf.

Nederland heeft andere problemen. De top van ING is jaren onderbetaald geweest. Ik wist dat niet en vind het knap dat ze het al die jaren verzwegen hebben. De stille armoede van Ewale Kist. Manhaftig loodste hij zijn gezin door de strenge Hollandse winters. Elke avond hutsput met klapspek. Boterhammen met schuifkaas. Gelukkig werd de socialist Wim Kok commissaris bij de ING. Hij zag de wantoestanden en greep in. De komende jaren worden de directiesalarissen verhoogd. Met zestig procent!

Bijna had de ING-top zich in het criminele voorkennis circuit moeten begeven. En dat is een heel treurig onderwereldje. Arme Cor B. Een zeiljacht met getuifort-meer personeel in de Middellandse Zee en onderrussen lisselen in een desolaat Belgisch bankfiliaal om een stiekem nummerrekeningetje te mogen openen. Cor is betrappt en wordt waarschijnlijk veroordeeld tot terugbetalen en 240 uur dienstverlening. Dat is de voorlopige eis.

Wat voor dienstverlening? Gaat hij de bejaarde billen van een oude moeder afvegen? Lijkt mij heel erg: Cor B. die je demente kont afveegt. En met wat voor papier? Ik vrees dat hij het minimaal met een biljet van 100 euro doet. Verder moet hij ramen lappen, po's legen, rollators kruijpollen en meer van zoort klusjes. Dit gun je toch command. Op je oude dag Cor B.

om je heen. Ik hoop dat hij nog eens een oude sok met een gering bedrag heeft, waarmee hij zijn straf kan afkopen.

De overheid zit namelijk om geld te springen. De Nederlandse voetbalclubs moeten gereed worden. De clubs kunnen de Fortresses van de spitsen niet meer opbrengen. Zelfs scheidsrechter Luinge kan geen bril betalen. Twintig faillet, Vitesse bankroet en MVV bijna opgegeven. Je moet er toch niet aan denken. Een land zonder Betaald Voetbal. Zonder stadions waar men massaal cyclusieringankerkeleerij goed scandent. Geen agenten in ME-uitrusting. Geen gesloopte veevagens. Geen tellen! Dat zou toch saai zijn. Heerlijk dat de overheid bijspringt. Vitesse krijgt 29 miljoen euro. Terwijl we via de Nuon met zijn allen dat stadion al bij elkaar hebben staan douchen.

Verder hebben we het geld ook hard nodig voor het redden van de pluimveesector. Dit wordt mijn eerste elioze Pasen. Ik laat de kinderen morgenochtend trouwens gewoon zoeken. Onderhand slapen mijn vrouw en ik lekker uit. Op een gegeven moment zullen ze janken dat ze niks kunnen vinden.

„Doorzoeken”, is mijn advies, „noot opgeven! Neem een voorbeeld aan de ING-top. Die mannen hebben ook jaren voor niks gebuffeld.”

Op die manier hoop ik ze tot een uur of twaalf bezig te houden. Dan een paar uurjes naar de Meubelboulevard en op Tweede Paasdag naar De Efteling. Als je als paashaas verkleed bent mag je daar gratis naar binnen. Ik vrees het ergste: de meest verschrikkelijke puntlusers uit Almere en Zoetermeer in een paashaasavontuur. Een 5-le paashazen voor Kaatsheuvel. Soms droom ik van een precisiebombardement. Een kleine vierhonderd dode paashazen. Of alleen verbrand en de armen eraf.

En zo kom ik toch weer op Ali. Armloze Ali. Ik overweeg om dit weekend, vermomd als paashaas of cliniclown, naar Koeweit af te reizen. Naar de kinderafdeling van het plaatselijke ziekenhuis. Met een cadeautje voor de kleine armloze Ali.

Wat dat voor cadeautje is?

Cyaankali.

TOUP VAN 'T HEK

Dagboek uit Bagdad, 19 april: **Dr. Geert Van Moorter en Dr. Claire Geraets, per satelliettelefoon**

"Harde getuigenissen voor rechtszaak tegen VS-militairen"

Bert De Belder



Dr. Claire Geraets en Dr. Geert Van Moorter gebruiken hun laatste dagen in Bagdad om feitenmateriaal en getuigenissen te verzamelen voor een rechtszaak tegen VS-generaal Tommy Franks, de bevelhebber van de agressielegers in Irak, en tegen onbekende VS-militairen die burgers hebben gedood of verwond. Die kwestie doet veel stof opwaaien; gisteravond mocht Geert live op BBC World de Amerikanen en Britten beschuldigen van inbreuken op het internationaal humanitair recht.

"Vandaag hebben we heel de dag hard gewerkt", meldt Geert. "We hebben 13 getuigenissen verzameld; sommige op band opgenomen, andere genoteerd; sommige in het Engels, andere alleen in het Arabisch. Vijf of zes oorlogsslachtoffers hebben Meester Jan Fermon met hun handtekening een mandaat gegeven om in hun naam een zaak aan te spannen tegen Franks, op basis van de Belgische 'genocidewet'. Het gaat o.a. om de gewonde chauffeur en ambulancier van de ziekenwagen die VS-militairen hebben beschoten, een van de gewonden die er achterin lagen en de medische directeur van het Al-Anour-ziekenhuis. We hebben ook verschillende verhalen geregistreerd van slachtoffers van clusterbommen. En er is de getuigenis van Hiba, het 12-jarig meisje met zware verwondingen aan voet en knie. Zij kreeg kogels in haar been toen vanuit Amerikaanse vliegtuigen werd geschoten in de richting van haar huis. Hiba, een lieve meid, is een beetje de mascotte van onze missie geworden. Morgen is het haar verjaardag, maar we hebben het vandaag al met haar gevierd. Met nog een kindertekening en een paar liedjes, mooi."



"In de stad zien we elke dag iets meer normalisering. De Amerikaanse mariniers zijn vervangen door gewone soldaten, en die controleren en 'ambeteren' ons minder. We zien ook meer lokale politie, die er met hun kalashnikovs de orde proberen in te houden. Er wordt nog wel geplunderd, maar minder."

"In het Saddam Center for Plastic Surgery was het vanochtend erg druk. Veel gewonden kwamen zich laten verzorgen, hun verband laten verversen. Niet bepaald opwekkende scènes: door gebrek aan pijnstillers ging de wondverzorging gepaard met veel gehuil en getier. In het hospitaal lagen al enkele dagen twee vrouwen die zwaar verbrand waren door een ongeluk thuis. De ene, amper 17 jaar en al moeder, is vandaag overleden. De andere, die twee kinderen heeft, is ook een vogel voor de kat.

In het hotel toonde een Amerikaanse journalist van CBS me beelden van Amerikaanse militaire 'medics' die een zwaar verbrande vrouw naar een gespecialiseerd brandwondencentrum vervoerden, nadat de journalist hen op de ernst van haar verwondingen had gewezen. Schoten die militaire gezondheidswerkers enkel in actie omdat er een camera in de buurt was? En hoe zou de journalist die beelden brengen? Je kan dat 'zwart' of 'wit' doen. 'Wit': 'het VS-leger doet alles wat mogelijk is voor burgerslachtoffers'. 'Zwart': die slachtoffers hebben ze zelf gemaakt, en de mariniers voeren alleen maar een goed-nieuwsshow op voor de camera. In ons hospitaal liepen ook Amerikaanse medics rond, maar die namen helemaal geen initiatief voor onze zwaarverbrande patiënten. Of hadden wij hen misschien moeten aanspreken? In onze aversie voor de VS-militairen kwam die idee niet eens in ons op..."

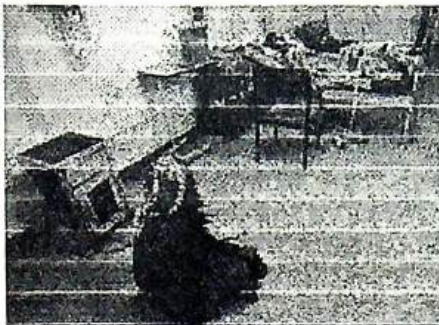
De filters van de massamedia



"We leren hier wel hoe de massamedia functioneren. De grote Amerikaanse tv-keten CBS wilde me live op antenne. Maar de journalist moest dit voorstel eerst overmaken aan zijn producer. 'Laat hem eerst eens zijn verhaal doen', meldde die. Ik vertelde

vooral over de komende rechtszaak. De journalist merkte fijntjes op dat schendingen van de Conventies van Genève voer waren voor juristen, niet voor dokters zoals ik... Hij stuurde mijn verhaal vervolgens naar een 'senior producer'. En daar hield het op, ze wilden mijn story niet...

Diezelfde journalist vertelde me ook dat VS-militairen hem niet hadden doorgelaten aan de luchthaven. Hij wilde er de levering van humanitaire hulpgoederen gaan filmen. 'Als je het niet afbolt, arresteren we je', kreeg hij te horen. 'Goed, doe me maar handboeien om, en breng me bij je officier', antwoordde de journalist. 'Als we je arresteren en boeien, zetten we je ergens af 15 km hier vandaan', reageerde de marinier... De journalist had heel deze scène gefilmd. Of hij die schending van het recht op informatie nu ook zou uitzenden, vroeg ik hem. 'Euh, nee, euh, misschien, we zullen wel zien...' Tot zover de vrije Amerikaanse pers...



Met de pers hadden we vandaag een tweede keer pech. Gewoonlijk proberen we bij de goed voorziene journalisten lekkere maaltijd scheef te slaan. Een paar dagen terug verzorgde ik een journalist van Reuters die herstelde van diarree. Ik maakte de man wijs dat hij best nog helemaal niets at, zodat ik zijn heerlijke maaltijd kreeg. Claire de helft en ik de helft, en ons buikje was weer rond. Maar vandaag kwamen we ook op culinair vlak van een kale reis terug..."

Dagboek uit Bagdad, 20 april: **Dr. Geert Van Moorter per satelliettelefoon****"We komen naar huis met explosief materiaal tegen de VS-militairen"**

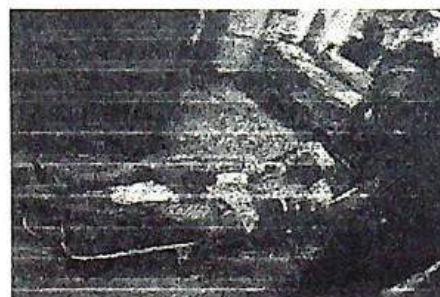
Bert De Belder



Dr. Claire Geraets en Dr. Geert Van Moorter zijn hun vertrek uit Bagdad aan het voorbereiden. Ze komen woensdag 23 april om 7.30 u aan in Zaventem. Met in hun valies nog extra getuigenverklaringen over de Amerikaanse oorlogsmisdaden in Irak. Die getuigenissen moeten VS-generaal Tommy Franks aan de schandpaal nagelen, in een zaak die Meester Jan Fermon voorbereidt voor het Belgisch gerecht.

"We hebben explosief materiaal mee", kondigt Geert aan. "Nog meer ziekenwagens zijn door de VS-militairen beschoten, met verschillende doden voor gevolg. De details hou ik liever voor de rechtszaak, maar je kan er op aan dat het vuurwerk zal geven! Daarnaast hebben Amerikaanse soldaten zich schuldig gemaakt aan het niet verlenen van medische bijstand aan mensen in nood: Irakezen die ze zelf hebben geraakt en verwond, lieten ze liggen langs de kant van de weg."

Het verzamelen van getuigenissen in een stad onder bezetting, met veel checkpoints, met mensen die zich thuis schuilhouden, zonder telefoon,...: het is geen gemakkelijke klus voor Claire en Geert. "Vandaag hebben we zelfs geen tijd gehad om te eten, we moesten heel de tijd rushen", zegt Geert. "Twee beschuitkoeken, meer hebben we niet achter onze kiezen gehad."



De dokters bezochten Saddam Medical City, waar een enorm academisch ziekenhuis staat, 16 verdiepingen hoog. "Door het elektriciteitsstekort zijn er maar vier van in gebruik", vertelt Geert. "En om plunderingen tegen te gaan, zijn alle gangen trappen afgesloten. Je mag je alleen met de lift verplaatsen, maar slechts twee van de twaalf liften functioneren. Als je een dokter voor advies wil hebben die op een andere verdieping zit, moet je soms een paar uur wachten vooraleer die er geraakt!"

Het Al-Anour-ziekenhuis is de voornaamste pleisterplek van Claire en Geert geworden. "Dr. Osama Fakri bedankte ons nog eens uitvoerig voor de externe fixators die we hem gaven. 'Prima modern spul', zei hij, 'die gaan we nog veel kunnen gebruiken. Ze zijn heel wat beter wat de Amerikaanse soldaten hier hebben binnengebracht!'" Dat is een pluim voor Dr. Bart Conix, orthopisch chirurg in het Antwerps Middelheim-ziekenhuis, die de fixators schonk aan Geneeskunde voor de Derde Wereld.



"We hebben de nieuwe 'burgemeester' van Bagdad kort ontmoet", vervolgt Geert, "Mohamed Zobaedeh. De man had beloofd binnen de twee dagen de elektriciteit in de stad te herstellen, maar een goede week later zit de hele stad nog altijd zonder. Zobaedeh is natuurlijk een marionet van de Amerikanen, en dat valt niet in goede aarde bij de bevolking. De mening dat de Amerikanen niet lang in het land mogen blijven, is echt veralgemeend onder de Irakezen. Langs de andere kant heeft de agressieoorlog en het verdwijnen van de Iraakse overheid zo'n vacuum en chaos geschapen, dat veel mensen schrik hebben van een onmiddellijke terugtrekking van de VS-militairen zonder klaar alternatief voor hun veiligheid. Moeten ze daarvoor op de VN of op de Arabische Liga rekenen, in afwachting dat ze weer zelf een eigen regering en politie hebben? Geen eenvoudige vragen in de complexe situatie van Bagdad vandaag..."



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April 2003

Practice to Deceive

Chaos in the Middle East is not the Bush hawks' nightmare scenario--it's their plan.

By Joshua Micah Marshall

Imagine it's six months from now. The Iraq war is over. After an initial burst of joy and gratitude at being liberated from Saddam's rule, the people of Iraq are watching, and waiting, and beginning to chafe under American occupation. Across the border, in Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Iran, our conquering presence has brought street protests and escalating violence. The United Nations and NATO



are in disarray, so America is pretty much on its own. Hemmed in by budget deficits at home and limited financial assistance from allies, the Bush administration is talking again about tapping Iraq's oil reserves to offset some of the costs of the American presence--talk that is further inflaming the region. Meanwhile, U.S. intelligence has discovered fresh evidence that, prior to the war, Saddam moved quantities of biological and chemical weapons to Syria. When Syria denies having such weapons, the administration starts massing troops on the Syrian border. But as they begin to move, there is an explosion: Hezbollah terrorists from southern Lebanon blow themselves up in a Baghdad restaurant, killing dozens of Western aid workers and journalists. Knowing that Hezbollah has cells in America, Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge puts the nation back on Orange Alert. FBI agents start sweeping through mosques, with a new round of arrests of Saudis, Pakistanis, Palestinians, and Yemenis.

To most Americans, this would sound like a frightening state of affairs, the kind that would lead them to wonder how and why we had got ourselves into this mess in the first place. But to the Bush administration hawks who are guiding American foreign policy, this isn't the nightmare scenario. It's everything going as anticipated.

In their view, invasion of Iraq was not merely, or even primarily, about getting rid of Saddam Hussein. Nor was it really about weapons of mass destruction, though their elimination was an important benefit. Rather, the administration sees the invasion as only the first move in a wider effort to reorder the power structure of the entire Middle East. Prior to the war, the president himself never quite said this openly. But hawkish neoconservatives within his administration gave strong hints. In February, Undersecretary of State John Bolton told Israeli officials that after defeating Iraq, the United States would "deal with" Iran, Syria, and North Korea. Meanwhile, neoconservative journalists have been channeling the administration's thinking. Late last month, *The Weekly Standard's* Jeffrey Bell reported that the administration has in mind a "world war between the United States and a political wing of Islamic fundamentalism ... a war of such reach and magnitude [that] the invasion of Iraq, or the capture of top al Qaeda commanders, should be seen as tactical events in a series of moves and countermoves stretching well into the future."

In short, the administration is trying to roll the table--to use U.S. military force, or the threat of it, to reform or topple virtually every regime in the region, from foes like Syria to friends like Egypt, on the theory that it is the undemocratic nature of these regimes that ultimately breeds terrorism. So events that may seem negative--Hezbollah for the first time targeting American civilians; U.S. soldiers preparing for war with Syria--while unfortunate in themselves, are actually part of the hawks' broader agenda. Each crisis will draw U.S. forces further into the region and each countermove in turn will create problems that can only be fixed by still further American involvement, until democratic governments--or, failing that, U.S. troops--rule the entire Middle East.

There is a startling amount of deception in all this--of hawks deceiving the American people, and perhaps in some cases even themselves. While it's conceivable that bold American action could democratize the Middle East, so broad and radical an initiative could also bring chaos and bloodshed on a massive scale. That all too real possibility leads most establishment foreign policy hands, including many in the State Department, to view the Bush plan with alarm. Indeed, the hawks' record so far does not inspire confidence. Prior to the invasion, for instance, they predicted that if the United States simply announced its intention to act against Saddam regardless of how the United Nations voted, most of our allies, eager to be on our good side, would support us. Almost none did. Yet despite such grave miscalculations, the hawks push on with their sweeping new agenda.

Like any group of permanent Washington revolutionaries fueled by visions of a righteous cause, the neocons long ago decided that criticism from the establishment isn't a reason for self-doubt but the surest sign that they're on the right track. But their confidence also comes from the curious fact that much of what could go awry with their plan will also serve to advance it. A full-scale confrontation between the United States and political Islam, they believe, is inevitable, so why not have it now, on our terms, rather than later, on theirs? Actually, there are plenty of good reasons not to purposely provoke a series of crises in the Middle East. But that's what the hawks are setting in motion, partly on the theory that the worse things get, the more their approach becomes the only plausible solution.

Moral Cloudiness

Ever since the neocons burst upon the public policy scene 30 years ago, their movement has been a marriage of moral idealism, military assertiveness, and

deception. Back in the early 1970s, this group of then-young and still mostly Democratic political intellectuals grew alarmed by the post-Vietnam Democrats' seeming indifference to the Soviet threat. They were equally appalled, however, by the amoral worldview espoused by establishment Republicans like Henry Kissinger, who sought co-existence with the Soviet Union. As is often the case with ex-socialists, the neocons were too familiar with communist tactics to ignore or romanticize communism's evils. The fact that many neocons were Jewish, and outraged by Moscow's increasingly visible persecution of Jews, also caused them to reject both the McGovernite and Kissingerian tendencies to ignore such abuses.

In Ronald Reagan, the neocons found a politician they could embrace. Like them, Reagan spoke openly about the evils of communism and, at least on the peripheries of the Cold War, preferred rollback to coexistence. Neocons filled the Reagan administration, and men like Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, Frank Gaffney, and others provided the intellectual ballast and moral fervor for the sharp turn toward confrontation that the United States adopted in 1981.



But achieving moral clarity often requires hiding certain realities. From the beginning, the neocons took a much more alarmist view of Soviet capacities and intentions than most experts. As late as 1980, the ur-neocon Norman Podhoretz warned of the imminent "Finlandization of America, the political and economic subordination of the United States to superior Soviet power," even raising the possibility that America's only options might be "surrender or war." We now know, of course, that U.S. intelligence estimates, which many neocons thought underestimated the magnitude and durability of Soviet power, in fact wildly overestimated them.

This willingness to deceive--both themselves and others--expanded as neocons grew more comfortable with power. Many spent the Reagan years orchestrating bloody wars against Soviet proxies in the Third World, portraying thugs like the Nicaraguan Contras and plain murderers like Jonas Savimbi of Angola as "freedom fighters." The nadir of this deceit was the Iran-Contra scandal, for which Podhoretz's son-in-law, Elliot Abrams, pled guilty to perjury. Abrams was later pardoned by Bush's father, and today, he runs Middle East policy in the Bush White House.

But in the end, the Soviet Union did fall. And the hawks' policy of confrontation did contribute to its collapse. So too, of course, did the economic and military rot most of the hawks didn't believe in, and the reforms of Mikhail Gorbachev, whom neocons such as Richard Perle counseled Reagan not to trust. But the neocons did not dwell on what they got wrong. Rather, the experience of having played a hand in the downfall of so great an evil led them to the opposite belief: that it's okay to be spectacularly wrong, even brazenly deceptive about the details, so long as you have moral vision and a willingness to use force.

What happened in the 1990s further reinforced that mindset. Hawks like Perle and William Kristol pulled their hair out when Kissingerians like Brent Scowcroft and Colin Powell left Saddam's regime in place after the first Gulf War. They watched with mounting fury as terrorist attacks by Muslim fundamentalists claimed more and more American and Israeli lives. They considered the Oslo accords an obvious mistake (how can you negotiate with a man like Yasir Arafat?), and as the decade progressed they became increasingly convinced that there was a nexus linking burgeoning terrorism and mounting anti-Semitism with repressive but nominally "pro-American" regimes like Saudi Arabia and Egypt. In 1996, several of the hawks--including Perle--even tried to sell Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the idea that Israel should attack Saddam on its own--advice Netanyahu wisely declined. When the Oslo process crumbled and Saudi Arabian terrorists killed 3,000 Americans on 9/11, the hawks felt, not without some justification, that they had seen this danger coming all along, while others had ignored it. The timing was propitious, because in September 2001 many already held jobs with a new conservative president willing to hear their pitch.

Prime Minister bin Laden

The pitch was this: The Middle East today is like the Soviet Union 30 years ago. Politically warped fundamentalism is the contemporary equivalent of communism or fascism. Terrorists with potential access to weapons of mass destruction are like an arsenal pointed at the United States. The primary cause of all this danger is the Arab world's endemic despotism, corruption, poverty, and economic stagnation. Repressive regimes channel dissent into the mosques, where the hopeless and disenfranchised are taught a brand of Islam that combines anti-modernism, anti-Americanism, and a worship of violence that borders on nihilism. Unable to overthrow their own authoritarian rulers, the citizenry turns its fury against the foreign power that funds and supports these corrupt regimes to maintain stability and access to oil: the United States. As Johns Hopkins University professor Fouad Ajami recently wrote in *Foreign Affairs*, "The great indulgence granted to the ways and phobias of Arabs has reaped a terrible harvest"--terrorism. Trying to "manage" this dysfunctional Islamic world, as Clinton attempted and Colin Powell counsels us to do, is as foolish, unproductive, and dangerous as *détente* was with the Soviets, the hawks believe. Nor is it necessary, given the unparalleled power of the American military. Using that power to confront Soviet communism led to the demise of that totalitarianism and the establishment of democratic (or at least non-threatening) regimes from the Black Sea to the Baltic Sea to the Bering Strait. Why not use that same power to upend the entire corrupt Middle East edifice and bring liberty, democracy, and the rule of law to the Arab world?

The hawks' grand plan differs depending on whom you speak to, but the basic outline runs like this: The United States establishes a reasonably democratic, pro-Western government in Iraq--assume it falls somewhere between Turkey and Jordan on the spectrum of democracy and the rule of law. Not perfect, representative democracy, certainly, but a system infinitely preferable to Saddam's. The example of a democratic Iraq will radically change the political dynamics of the Middle East. When Palestinians see average Iraqis beginning to enjoy real freedom and economic opportunity, they'll want the same themselves. With that happy prospect on one hand and implacable United States will on the other, they'll demand that the Palestinian Authority reform politically and negotiate with Israel. That in turn will lead to a real peace deal between the Israelis and Palestinians. A democratic Iraq will also hasten the fall of the fundamentalist Shi'a mullahs in Iran, whose citizens are gradually adopting anti-fanatic, pro-Western sympathies. A

democratized Iran would create a string of democratic, pro-Western governments (Turkey, Iraq, and Iran) stretching across the historical heartland of Islam. Without a hostile Iraq towering over it, Jordan's pro-Western Hashemite monarchy would likely come into full bloom. Syria would be no more than a pale reminder of the bad old days. (If they made trouble, a U.S. invasion would take care of them, too.) And to the tiny Gulf emirates making hesitant steps toward democratization, the corrupt regimes of Saudi Arabia and Egypt would no longer look like examples of stability and strength in a benighted region, but holdouts against the democratic tide. Once the dust settles, we could decide whether to ignore them as harmless throwbacks to the bad old days or deal with them, too. We'd be in a much stronger position to do so since we'd no longer require their friendship to help us manage ugly regimes in Iraq, Iran, and Syria.

The audacious nature of the neocons' plan makes it easy to criticize but strangely difficult to dismiss outright. Like a character in a bad made-for-TV thriller from the 1970s, you can hear yourself saying, "That plan's just crazy enough to work."

But like a TV plot, the hawks' vision rests on a willing suspension of disbelief, in particular, on the premise that every close call will break in our favor: The guard will fall asleep next to the cell so our heroes can pluck the keys from his belt. The hail of enemy bullets will plink-plink-plink over our heroes' heads. And the getaway car in the driveway will have the keys waiting in the ignition. Sure, the hawks' vision could come to pass. But there are at least half a dozen equally plausible alternative scenarios that would be disastrous for us.

To begin with, this whole endeavor is supposed to be about reducing the long-term threat of terrorism, particularly terrorism that employs weapons of mass destruction. But, to date, every time a Western or non-Muslim country has put troops into Arab lands to stamp out violence and terror, it has awakened entire new terrorist organizations and a generation of recruits. Placing U.S. troops in Riyadh after the Gulf War (to protect Saudi Arabia and its oilfields from Saddam) gave Osama bin Laden a cause around which he built al Qaeda. Israel took the West Bank in a war of self-defense, but once there its occupation helped give rise to Hamas. Israel's incursion into southern Lebanon (justified at the time, but transformed into a permanent occupation) led to the rise of Hezbollah. Why do we imagine that our invasion and occupation of Iraq, or whatever countries come next, will turn out any differently?

The Bush administration also insists that our right to act preemptively and unilaterally, with or without the international community's formal approval, rests on the need to protect American lives. But with the exception of al Qaeda, most terrorist organizations in the world, and certainly in the Middle East, do not target Americans. Hamas certainly doesn't. Hezbollah, the most fearsome of terrorist organizations beside al Qaeda, has killed American troops in the Middle East, but not for some years, and it has never targeted American civilians on American soil. Yet like Hamas, Hezbollah has an extensive fundraising cell operation in the States (as do many terrorist organizations, including the Irish Republican Army). If we target them in the Middle East, can't we reasonably assume they will respond by activating these cells and taking the war worldwide?

Next, consider the hawks' plans for those Middle East states that are authoritarian yet "friendly" to the United States—specifically Egypt and Saudi Arabia. No question these are problem countries. Their governments buy our weapons and accept our foreign aid yet allow vicious anti-Semitism to spew from the state run

airwaves and tolerate clerics who preach jihad against the West. But is it really in our interests to work for their overthrow? Many hawks clearly think so. I asked Richard Perle last year about the dangers that might flow from the fall of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. "Mubarak is no great shakes," he quipped. "Surely we can do better than Mubarak." When I asked Perle's friend and fellow Reagan-era neocon Ken Adelman to calculate the costs of having the toppling of Saddam lead to the overthrow of the House of Saud, he shot back: "All the better if you ask me."

This cavalier call for regime change, however, runs into a rather obvious problem. When the communist regimes of Eastern and Central Europe fell after 1989, the people of those nations felt grateful to the United States because we helped liberate them from their Russian colonial masters. They went on to create pro-Western democracies. The same is unlikely to happen, however, if we help "liberate" Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The tyrannies in these countries are home grown, and the U.S. government has supported them, rightly or wrongly, for decades, even as we've ignored (in the eyes of Arabs) the plight of the Palestinians. Consequently, the citizens of these countries generally hate the United States, and show strong sympathy for Islamic radicals. If free elections were held in Saudi Arabia today, Osama bin Laden would probably win more votes than Crown Prince Abdullah. Topple the pro-Western autocracies in these countries, in other words, and you won't get pro-Western democracies but anti-Western tyrannies.

To this dilemma, the hawks offer two responses. One is that eventually the citizens of Egypt and Saudi Arabia will grow disenchanted with their anti-Western Islamic governments, just as the people of Iran have, and become our friends. To which the correct response is, well, sure, that's a nice theory, but do we really want to make the situation for ourselves hugely worse now on the strength of a theoretical future benefit?

The hawks' other response is that if the effort to push these countries toward democracy goes south, we can always use our military might to secure our interests. "We need to be more assertive," argues Max Boot, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, "and stop letting all these two-bit dictators and rogue regimes push us around and stop being a patsy for our so-called allies, especially in Saudi Arabia." Hopefully, in Boot's view, laying down the law will be enough. But he envisions a worst-case scenario that would involve the United States "occupying the Saudi's oil fields and administering them as a trust for the people of the region."

What Boot is calling for, in other words, is the creation of a de facto American empire in the Middle East. In fact, there's a subset of neocons who believe that given our unparalleled power, empire is our destiny and we might as well embrace it. The problem with this line of thinking is, of course, that it ignores the lengthy and troubling history of imperial ambitions, particularly in the Middle East. The French and the English didn't leave voluntarily; they were driven out. And they left behind a legacy of ignorance, exploitation, and corruption that's largely responsible for the region's current dysfunctional politics.

Another potential snafu for the hawks is Iran, arguably the most dangerous state in the Middle East. The good news is that the fundamentalist Shi'a mullahs who have been running the government, exporting terrorism, and trying to enrich their uranium, are increasingly unpopular. Most experts believe that the mullahs' days are numbered, and that true democracy will come to Iran. That day will arrive sooner, the hawks argue, with a democratic Iraq on Iran's border. But the opposite could happen. If the mullahs are smart, they'll cooperate just enough with the Americans

not to provoke an attack, but put themselves forth to their own people as defenders of Iranian independence and Iran's brother Shi'a in southern Iraq who are living under the American jackboot. Such a strategy might keep the fundamentalists in power for years longer than they otherwise might have been.

Then there is the mother of all problems, Iraq. The hawks' whole plan rests on the assumption that we can turn it into a self-governing democracy--that the very presence of that example will transform politics in the Middle East. But what if we can't really create a democratic, self-governing Iraq, at least not very quickly? What if the experience we had after World War II in Germany and Japan, two ethnically homogeneous nations, doesn't quite work in an ethnically divided Iraq where one group, the Sunni Arabs, has spent decades repressing and slaughtering the others? As one former Army officer with long experience with the Iraq file explains it, the "physical analogy to Saddam Hussein's regime is a steel beam in compression." Give it one good hit, and you'll get a violent explosion. One hundred thousand U.S. troops may be able to keep a lid on all the pent-up hatred. But we may soon find that it's unwise to hand off power to the fractious Iraqis. To invoke the ugly but apt metaphor which Jefferson used to describe the American dilemma of slavery, we will have the wolf by the ears. You want to let go. But you dare not.

And what if we do muster the courage to allow elections, but the Iraqis choose a government we can't live with--as the Japanese did in their first post-war election, when the United States purged the man slated to become prime minister? But if we do that in Iraq, how will it look on Al Jazeera? Ultimately, the longer we stay as occupiers, the more Iraq becomes not an example for other Arabs to emulate, but one that helps Islamic fundamentalists make their case that America is just an old-fashioned imperium bent on conquering Arab lands. And that will make worse all the problems set forth above.

None of these problems are inevitable, of course. Luck, fortitude, deft management, and help from allies could bring about very different results. But we can probably only rely on the first three because we are starting this enterprise over the expressed objections of almost every other country in the world. And that's yet another reason why overthrowing the Middle East won't be the same as overthrowing communism. We did the latter, after all, within a tight formal alliance, NATO. Reagan's most effective military move against Moscow, for instance, placing Pershing II missiles in Western Europe, could never have happened, given widespread public protests, except that NATO itself voted to let the weapons in. In the Middle East, however, we're largely alone. If things go badly, what allies we might have left are liable to say to us: You broke it, you fix it.

Whacking the Hornet's Nest

If the Bush administration has thought through these various negative scenarios--and we must presume, or at least pray, that it has--it certainly has not shared them with the American people. More to the point, the president has not even leveled with the public that such a clean-sweep approach to the Middle East is, in fact, their plan. This breaks new ground in the history of pre-war presidential deception. Franklin Roosevelt said he was trying to keep the United States out of World War II even as he--in some key ways--courted a confrontation with the Axis powers that he saw as both inevitable and necessary. History has judged him well for this. Far more brazenly, Lyndon Johnson's administration greatly exaggerated the Gulf of Tonkin incident to gin up support for full-throttle engagement in Vietnam. The war proved to be Johnson's undoing. When President Clinton used American troops to

quell the fighting in Bosnia he said publicly that our troops would be there no longer than a year, even though it was widely understood that they would be there far longer. But in the case of these deceptions, the public was at least told what the goals of the wars were and whom and where we would be fighting.

Today, however, the great majority of the American people have no concept of what kind of conflict the president is leading them into. The White House has presented this as a war to depose Saddam Hussein in order to keep him from acquiring weapons of mass destruction--a goal that the majority of Americans support. But the White House really has in mind an enterprise of a scale, cost, and scope that would be almost impossible to sell to the American public. The White House knows that. So it hasn't even tried. Instead, it's focused on getting us into Iraq with the hope of setting off a sequence of events that will draw us inexorably towards the agenda they have in mind.

The brazenness of this approach would be hard to believe if it weren't entirely in line with how the administration has pursued so many of its other policy goals. Its preferred method has been to use deceit to create *faits accomplis*, facts on the ground that then make the administration's broader agenda almost impossible not to pursue. During and after the 2000 campaign, the president called for major education and prescription drug programs plus a huge tax cut, saying America could easily afford them all because of large budget surpluses. Critics said it wasn't true, and the growing budget deficits have proven them right. But the administration now uses the existence of big budget deficits as a way to put the squeeze on social programs--part of its plan all along. Strip away the presidential seal and the fancy titles, and it's just a straight-up con.

The same strategy seemed to guide the administration's passive-aggressive attitude towards our allies. It spent the months after September 11 signaling its distaste for international agreements and entangling alliances. The president then demanded last September that the same countries he had snubbed support his agenda in Iraq. And last month, when most of those countries refused, hawks spun that refusal as evidence that they were right all along. Recently, a key neoconservative commentator with close ties to the administration told me that the question since the end of the Cold War has been which global force would create the conditions for global peace and security: the United States, NATO, or the United Nations. With NATO now wrecked, he told me, the choice is between the United States and the United Nations. Whether NATO is actually wrecked remains to be seen. But the strategy is clear: push the alliance to the breaking point, and when it snaps, cite it as proof that the alliance was good for nothing anyway. It's the definition of *chutzpah*, like the kid who kills his parents and begs the judge for sympathy because he's an orphan.

Another president may be able to rebuild NATO or get the budget back in balance. But once America begins the process of remaking the Middle East in the way the hawks have in mind, it will be extremely difficult for any president to pull back. Vietnam analogies have long been overused, and used inappropriately, but this may be one case where the comparison is apt.

Ending Saddam Hussein's regime and replacing it with something stable and democratic was always going to be a difficult task, even with the most able leadership and the broadest coalition. But doing it as the Bush administration now intends is something like going outside and giving a few good whacks to a hornets' nest because you want to get them out in the open and have it out with them once

and for all. Ridding the world of Islamic terrorism by rooting out its ultimate sources--Muslim fundamentalism and the Arab world's endemic despotism, corruption, and poverty--might work. But the costs will be immense. Whether the danger is sufficient and the costs worth incurring would make for an interesting public debate. The problem is that once it's just us and the hornets, we really won't have any choice.

Joshua Micah Marshall, a *Washington Monthly* contributing writer, is author of the Talking Points Memo.

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The Unthinkable Is Becoming Normal

Do Not Forget The Horror...
The saving of one little boy must not be
a cover for the crime of this war.

By John Pilger
The Independent - UK
4-21-3

Last Sunday, seated in the audience at the Bafta television awards ceremony, I was struck by the silence. Here were many of the most influential members of the liberal elite, the writers, producers, dramatists, journalists and managers of our main source of information, television; and not one broke the silence. It was as though we were disconnected from the world outside: a world of rampant, rapacious power and great crimes committed in our name by our government and its foreign master. Iraq is the "test case", says the Bush regime, which every day sails closer to Mussolini's definition of fascism: the merger of a militarist state with corporate power. Iraq is a test case for western liberals, too. As the suffering mounts in that stricken country, with Red Cross doctors describing "incredible" levels of civilian casualties, the choice of the next conquest, Syria or Iran, is "debated" on the BBC, as if it were a World Cup venue.

The unthinkable is being normalised. The American essayist Edward Herman wrote: "There is usually a division of labour in doing and rationalising the unthinkable, with the direct brutalising and killing done by one set of individuals ... others working on improving technology (a better crematory gas, a longer burning and more adhesive napalm, bomb fragments that penetrate flesh in hard-to-trace patterns). It is the function of the experts, and the mainstream media, to normalise the unthinkable for the general public."

Herman wrote that following the 1991 Gulf War, whose nocturnal images of American bulldozers burying thousands of teenage Iraqi conscripts, many of them alive and trying to surrender, were never shown. Thus, the slaughter was normalised. A study released just before Christmas 1991 by the Medical Educational Trust revealed that more 200,000 Iraqi men, women and children were killed or died as a direct result of the American-led attack. This was barely reported, and the homicidal nature of the "war" never entered public

consciousness in this country, let alone America.

The Pentagon's deliberate destruction of Iraq's civilian infrastructure, such as power sources and water and sewage plants, together with the imposition of an embargo as barbaric as a medieval siege, produced a degree of suffering never fully comprehended in the West. Documented evidence was available, volumes of it; by the late 1990s, more than 6,000 infants were dying every month, and the two senior United Nations officials responsible for humanitarian relief in Iraq, Denis Halliday and Hans von Sponeck, resigned, protesting the embargo's hidden agenda. Halliday called it "genocide".

As of last July, the United States, backed by the Blair government, was wilfully blocking humanitarian supplies worth \$5.4bn, everything from vaccines and plasma bags to simple painkillers, all of which Iraq had paid for and the Security Council had approved.

Last month's attack by the two greatest military powers on a demoralised, sick and largely defenceless population was the logical extension of this barbarism. This is now called a "victory", and the flags are coming out. Last week, the submarine HMS Turbulent returned to Plymouth, flying the Jolly Roger, the pirates' emblem. How appropriate. This nuclear-powered machine fired some 30 American Tomahawk cruise missiles at Iraq. Each missile cost £700,000; a total of £21m. That alone would provide desperate Basra with food, water and medicines.

Imagine: what did Commander Andrew McKendrick's 30 missiles hit? How many people did they kill or maim in a population nearly half of which are children? Maybe, Commander, you targeted a palace with gold taps in the bathroom, or a "command and control facility", as the Americans and Geoffrey Hoon like to lie. Or perhaps each of your missiles had a sensory device that could distinguish George Bush's "evil-doers" from toddlers. What is certain is that your targets did not include the Ministry of Oil.

When the invasion began, the British public was called upon to "support" troops sent illegally and undemocratically to kill people with whom we had no quarrel. "The ultimate test of our professionalism" is how Commander McKendrick describes an unprovoked attack on a nation with no submarines, no navy and no air force, and now with no clean water and no electricity and, in many hospitals, no anaesthetic with which to amputate small limbs shredded by shrapnel. I have seen elsewhere how this is done, with a gag in the patient's mouth.

One child, Ali Ismaeel Abbas, the boy who lost his parents and his arms in a missile attack, has been flown to a modern hospital in Kuwait. Publicity has saved him. Tony Blair says he will "do everything he can" to help him. This must be the ultimate insult to the memory of all the children of Iraq who have died violently in Blair's war, and as a result of the embargo that Blair enthusiastically endorsed. The saving of Ali substitutes a media spectacle of charity for our right to knowledge of the extent of the crime committed against

the young in our name. Let us now see the pictures of the "truckload of dozens of dismembered women and children" that the Red Cross doctors saw.

As Ali was flown to Kuwait, the Americans were preventing Save The Children from sending a plane with medical supplies into northern Iraq, where 40,000 are desperate. According to the UN, half the population of Iraq has only enough food to last a few weeks. The head of the World Food Programme says that 40 million people around the world are now seriously at risk because of the distraction of the humanitarian disaster in Iraq.

And this is "liberation"? No, it is bloody conquest, witnessed by America's mass theft of Iraq's resources and natural wealth. Ask the crowds in the streets, for whom the fear and hatred of Saddam Hussein have been transferred, virtually overnight, to Bush and Blair and perhaps to "us".

Such is the magnitude of Blair's folly and crime that the contrivance of his vindication is urgent. As if speaking for the vindicators, Andrew Marr, the BBC's political editor, reported: "[Blair] said they would be able to take Baghdad without a bloodbath, and that in the end the Iraqis would be celebrating. And on both of those points he has been proved conclusively right."

What constitutes a bloodbath to the BBC's man in Downing Street? Did the murder of the 3,000 people in New York's Twin Towers qualify? If his answer is yes, then the thousands killed in Iraq during the past month is a bloodbath. One report says that more than 3,000 Iraqis were killed within 24 hours or less. Or are the vindicators saying that the lives of one set of human beings have less value than those recognisable to us? Devaluation of human life has always been essential to the pursuit of imperial power, from the Congo to Vietnam, from Chechnya to Iraq.

If, as Milan Kundera wrote, "the struggle of people against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting", then we must not forget. We must not forget Blair's lies about weapons of mass destruction which, as Hans Blix now says, were based on "fabricated evidence". We must not forget his callous attempts to deny that an American missile killed 62 people in a Baghdad market. And we must not forget the reason for the bloodbath. Last September, in announcing its National Security Strategy, Bush served notice that America intended to dominate the world by force. Iraq was indeed the "test case". The rest was a charade.

We must not forget that a British defence secretary has announced, for the first time, that his government is prepared to launch an attack with nuclear weapons. He echoes Bush, of course. An ascendant mafia now rules the United States, and the Prime Minister is in thrall to it. Together, they empty noble words of liberation, freedom and democracy of their true meaning. The unspoken truth is that behind the bloody conquest of Iraq is the conquest of us all: of our minds, our humanity and our self-respect at the very least. If we say and do nothing, victory over us is assured.

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MainPage

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Tank captain admits firing on media hotel

Giles Tremlett
Monday April 21, 2003
The Guardian

A US army captain has admitted that an Abrams tank under his command fired on the Palestine hotel in Baghdad, killing two journalists, but said he had not been told that the hotel was home to the international press.

In an interview with France's *Nouvel Observateur*, Captain Philip Wolford, confirmed that the deaths of Spanish television cameraman Jose Couso and Reuters cameraman Taras Protsyuk on April 8 were caused by one of his tanks during a battle with Iraqi forces.

Capt Wolford, commander of A Company, 4th Battalion, of the 3rd Infantry Division, said his men had seen a glint of light reflecting off what they thought were binoculars on one of the hotel's balconies.

His unit, which included Bradley fighting vehicles, was under attack from the opposite side of the Tigris river, at a road junction beside the Jumhuriyah bridge.

"In front of us there was an especially active building, with rockets and missiles. To the left were two other missile launchers. On the right, further away but very efficient, there was another missile launcher," he said.

He had assumed that the binoculars were being held by whoever was directing the incoming sniper and fire which, coming from a radius of 180 degrees, had hit all of his company's tanks. Some of that fire had come from buildings near the hotel, he said.

"The fire was arriving with no let up ... I returned fire without hesitation. That is the rule," he said. "It was the strongest resistance I encountered in Baghdad. Four of my men were injured."

He said he regretted that the tank shot, which hit the 14th and 15th storeys of the hotel, had killed two journalists and wounded three. "I feel bad. My men feel bad," he said.

But he insisted that he had not been told that the hotel was filled with foreign journalists and that he had no orders to leave it alone.

"No. I had no information of that kind," he said. He said he had been in constant radio contact with his commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Philip DeCamp, during the fighting.

He doubted that orders to avoid the hotel could have got lost as they travelled down the chain of command. "I cannot for a moment imagine that information sent by the divisional headquarters would not have got to me," he said.

Le Nouvel Observateur reached a different conclusion. "In Washington, or in the divisional HQ or along the chain of command, someone either did not wish to, or did not see fit to, hand on this information," it said.

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Bush Scales Back 'Nation Building' In Iraq

By David Rennie in Washington
Daily Telegraph - UK
4-21-3

Senior Bush administration officials yesterday called for American forces to leave Iraq within months in the face of political and financial constraints on a lengthy occupation.

White House and Pentagon officials played down what America could or should try to achieve before handing over power to a local administration.

In contrast, before the war, the State Department sent Congress a plan for rebuilding Iraq setting deadlines of six and 12 months for such tasks as providing basic health care to all Iraqis, and repairing 6,000 schools. More loftily, the State Department promised to move Iraq towards "self-managed economic prosperity" and the rule of law.

In February, President Bush

[http://www.dailytelegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?](http://www.dailytelegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2003/02/27/wbush27.xml)

[xml=/news/2003/02/27/wbush27.xml](http://www.dailytelegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2003/02/27/wbush27.xml)>appeared to endorse such ambitious visions, citing the precedent of post-war Germany and Japan, when American troops left behind "lasting institutions of freedom".

Though American officials insisted they remain committed to rebuilding Iraq's infrastructure, they told the Washington Post that the world should expect months, and not years, of nation-building.

One senior official said: "The president's goal is to leave Iraq on the road to prosperity and security and democracy - or at least give them a fighting chance of it."

Pentagon officials focused on the costs of post-war reconstruction, challenging assumptions that tens of billions of dollars should be spent on repairs and peacekeeping.

Defence officials told the Post that it would not take much to bring infrastructure back to pre-war levels, noting that Iraqis were used to power cuts and imperfect water supplies.

One unnamed senior defence official questioned estimates that 75,000 troops would be needed to maintain law and order, suggesting that US-allied Kurdish fighters could move south towards Baghdad.

White House officials focused on the need to avoid a lengthy occupation that could inflame the Arab world. "It's not because we're doing it on the cheap, but because we don't want to have an overbearing presence there," one said.

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MainPage

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Al-Jazeera TV Banned From Basra By UK

The Mirror - UK
4-22-3

The Arab news satellite TV channel Al-Jazeera has claimed British forces in Basra banned the network from reporting in the southern Iraqi city.

It said a reporter was detained and his equipment was confiscated. British army officials denied the report.

Al-Jazeera said British troops banned Mohammed Alsayed Muhsen from reporting in Basra "until further notice," after detaining him for three hours.

British military officials at US Central Command in Qatar denied Muhsen had been detained or that his equipment had been confiscated.

The Doha-based channel issued a statement condemning "the ban" and said this was the third time British forces had imposed a ban on its reporters.

"Al-Jazeera condemns any attempt to hinder members of the media corps from pursuing their profession," the statement said.

It called upon British forces to "reconsider" the decision and to "immediately lift the ban".

A British spokeswoman, Army Maj Cath Convery, said British forces had told Muhsen to leave the scene of a burning tank that he was filming for security reasons, but said he was not forced out or detained.

She added that Muhsen continued filming the tank for about three hours and declined to move.

The tank had been set on fire by local Iraqis, and British forces on patrol were concerned that its ammunition might explode, she said. Subsequently, Muhsen agreed voluntarily to register with the 1st UK Armoured Division headquarters in Basra -- a non-compulsory listing designed so British forces know the journalists who are working in the area, she added.

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/24by7panews/page.cfm?>

Gesprek met Colette Moulaert, terug uit Bagdad : *dinsdag, 22 april 2003, 10u01*

Kinderen zoals Ali, zonder armpjes, ik heb er tientallen gezien...

Ze is niet te spreken over de mediageilheid rond Ali, het Iraakse jongetje dat beide armpjes kwijt is en nu verzorgd wordt in Koeweit. Colette Moulaert heeft er tientallen gezien, dode kinderen, afschuwelijk verminkte kinderen, getraumatiseerd voor het leven. De kinderarts uit Charleroi zat een maand in Bagdad. Ze zag de bommen, het verzet, de plunderingen, de bezetting. Ze is woedend op het Amerikaans leger en op de Belgische regering die de wapentransporten door ons land liet passeren. Dat wil ze aanklagen. Als dokter, als lijsttrekker van de lijst PTB in Wallonië en gewoon als mens.

Marco Louvier

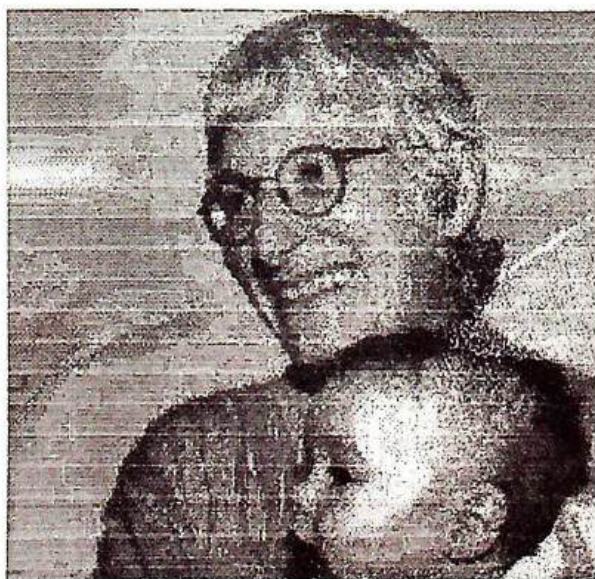


Burgerdoelwitten rechtstreeks gevisieerd

"Toen de bombardementen begonnen, stroomden de gekwetste burgers meteen toe in de hospitalen. Ik ging naar de wijk waar de eerste vier huizen getroffen werden door een raket. Een vrouw zei me: "Ik zit hier nu zoals de Palestijnen, zonder huis. Zoals de Palestijnen hebben wij alleen bazooka's om tegen de tanks en de vliegtuigen op te kunnen. Wacht tot ik een Amerikaan voor me krijg om hem in zijn gezicht te zeggen wat ik er van denk."

Het bewijs dat het Amerikaans leger doelbewust burgerdoelwitten heeft gebombardeerd, is dat ze echt goed gemikt hebben toen ze de kazerne van de luchtmacht bombardeerden. De slachtingen in Babylon of op de markt van Bagdad, dat zijn geen vergissingen. Er is daar verder niets anders. En ze deden het op een vrijdagavond, toen iedereen daar op straat liep.

De Amerikaanse kranten zeggen het trouwens openlijk: je kan de oorlog niet winnen als je alleen soldaten doodt, je moet terreur scheppen onder de burgerbevolking."



Ik heb tientallen Ali's gezien

"We hebben verschrikkelijke dingen gezien in de hospitalen. Bomscherven schieten horizontaal weg, dringen de huizen binnen en maken veel gekwetsten. Scherven van kruisraketten hebben geen regelmatige vorm en maken lelijke wonden. En omdat ze telkens nieuwe gekwetsten binnenbrachten, konden alleen de ergste gevallen in het hospitaal blijven.

Dat zag ik in een hospitaal in Babylon, waar ik het meest onder de indruk geraakte. Het Amerikaans leger had clusterbommen gebruikt, die uiteenspatten in een groot aantal minibommen. Ze richten geen materiële schade aan, ze dienen om mensen te doden. Ze ontploffen niet allemaal en later trappen kinderen er op. Veel kinderen

verloren zo hun beentjes.

Het maakt me zo kwaad als ik al dat mediagedoe zie rond de kleine Ali die naar Koeweit is gestuurd om er protheses te krijgen. Ik heb tientallen Ali's gezien. Als ze niet gebombardeerd

hadden, dan was dit niet gebeurd. Idem voor de vijftien hospitalen die ze in Bagdad willen bouwen. Daar krijg ik pijn van in mijn ingewanden."

Kinderen die voor het leven getekend zijn

"De Iraakse kinderen hebben geleerd wat haat is en angst. Door de bombardementen konden veel kinderen niet slapen, ze hadden nachtmerries, begonnen opnieuw in bed te plassen. Twee kinderen konden twee dagen niet meer spreken nadat hun huis door een raket was getroffen. In België hou ik me bezig met kindermishandeling en ik weet dat de kinderen vanaf een bepaald punt een trauma voor het leven oplopen, zelfs met de hulp van de beste ploeg psychologen die er bestaat."



De glimlach van Dora

"De kleine Dora kreeg bomscherven in de rug, in het begin van de oorlog. Haar ruggengraat was geraakt, ze is aan een kant helemaal verlamd, aan de andere kant iets minder. Na haar operatie was ze heel verdrietig. We gaven haar een kindertekening die we hadden meegenomen uit België, een initiatief van StopUSA in Aalst. Dora moest er om glimlachen. En toen de dokter er aan kwam, pakte ze de tekening als om zich te beschermen tegen de pijn die misschien zou komen."

Een half miljoen ton levensmiddelen geblokkeerd

"Minder spectaculair dan de gekwetsten maar met even ernstige gevolgen is de verwoesting de infrastructuur die essentieel is voor de gezondheid. In Basra werden water- en elektriciteitsvoorzieningen en opslagplaatsen voor levensmiddelen gebombardeerd. De VS verhinderden dat drie schepen in de Golf een half miljoen ton voedsel konden lossen, dat nochtans door de Irakezen was betaald.

In Bagdad was de telecommunicatie het eerst getroffen. Om de hulpdiensten te organiseren is dat een ramp. Later werd de elektriciteit afgesneden, zodat de gezinnen hun bederfbaar voedsel niet konden bewaren. Sinds de Amerikanen de stad bezetten, zijn er geen groenten meer. Voor de calorieën van de kinderen gaat het nog, er zijn voldoende niet-bederfbare voorraden maar het gebrek aan vitamines, proteïnes enzovoort is niet te schatten. Door het embargo zijn er kinderen met bloedarmoede. Die hebben geen enkele reserve. Ik weet niet hoelang de gezinnen dat kunnen volhouden."



Elk half uur vallen er bommen

"Ik heb bijna niet geslapen in die vier weken, door de bombardementen. Dat was niet af en toe, dat was om het half uur. En wij hadden dan nog het geluk dat we in een hotel met geluidswering zaten. En de veiligste plek in Bagdad, gezien heel de internationale pers daar zat. Beeld je eens in wat die Irakezen hebben doorstaan..."

Ik had een vreemd gevoel, alsof ik bibberde van de kou. Dat kwam door het vibreren van de bommen. Ik praatte daarover met een journalist, een oude rot in het vak die alle

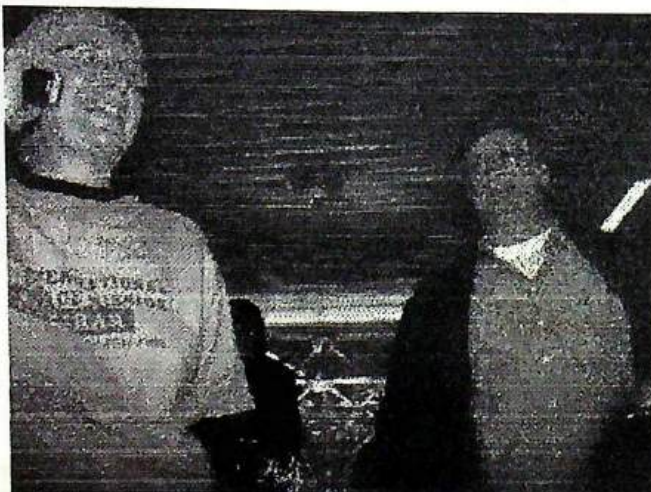
oorlogen had 'gedaan'. Het was de eerste keer dat hij zoiets voelde, zei hij. Wat voor bommen

waren dat dan wel?"

Die B52'ers waren over België gevlogen

"Ik Irak bekijken ze de Belgen als de goeien. Maar telkens ik een tank zag, bedacht ik dat die misschien via de haven van Antwerpen was aangevoerd. Telkens ik een bom hoorde vallen, bedacht ik dat die B52'er misschien over ons land was gevlogen. Ik wist dat die bommenwerpers er zes uur over doen vanuit Groot-Brittannië. Ik kon dus min of meer zeggen op welk moment ze over ons land waren gekomen..."

Ik walg van al dat gedoe rond Louis Michel. Ik zie de ogen van die Iraakse kinderen voor me. Kinderen die voor het leven getekend zijn, in hun lijfje of in hun hoofd. In het begin zei ik tegen de Irakezen hoe de Belgische regering zich werkelijk gedraagt. Maar daar ben ik snel mee gestopt, dat diende tot niets, ze konden er alleen moedeloos van worden. Dat is ons probleem. Nu kan ik dit eindelijk voluit aanklagen.



Een bazooka-opleiding voor de Irakese vrouwen

"Het verzet van de Irakezen was voorbereid voor de bombardementen begonnen. De hospitalen waren omgevormd tot oorlogshospitalen, ze wisten dat ze er een groot aantal gekwetsten in moesten opvangen. In alle wijken waren er zelfverdedigingsmilities. Veel vrouwen en kinderen werden ondergebracht buiten de hoofdstad, waar ze minder kans liepen te worden getroffen, ook al zijn er ook daar bommen gevallen.

De regering heeft in één keer voldoende voedselvoorraden uitgedeeld voor zes maand: rijst, bloem, olie, thee. Hospitalen waren voorzien van stroomgeneratoren, maar die waren helaas vaak versleten. Op veel plaatsen was een waterzuiveringstation geïmproviseerd om toch het water van de Tiger te kunnen gebruiken. Vrouwen leerden schieten met geweren en bazooka's. Daar waar een bom vier huizen vernielde, zag ik mannen op post die drie wegen tegelijk konden in het oog houden.

Waarom dat verzet dan gestopt is nadat het eerst zo stevig werk leverde, met name rond het vliegveld? De zondag voor de inname van Bagdad begon het Amerikaans leger de stad in en uit te rijden. Ik zag die dag veel achtergelaten kanonnen. Zaten ze zonder munitie? Ik kan alleen gissen. In elk geval was iedereen daar de maandagmorgen maar na de siësta waren ze allemaal verdwenen. Ze zijn goed verscholen. Iemand zei me: "De mariniers zullen snel vervangen worden door soldaten met politietaken. Alle wapens zijn er nog, wacht maar..."



Wij zijn de megafoons

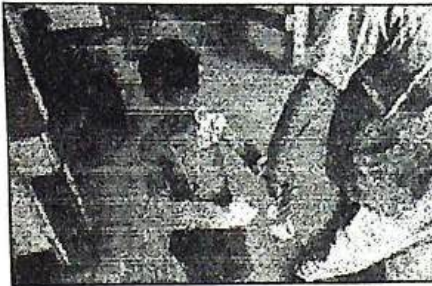
"Wij speelden de rol van megafoon van de Irakezen. En de organisatie hier in België was dan weer onze megafoon. Zo konden we onze stem honderd of duizend keer meer laten weerklinken. Dank zij internet konden we heel de wereld bereiken. De Irakezen vonden dat erg belangrijk. We konden hen ook zeggen dat veel mensen in onze landen tegen de oorlog zijn."

Human shields

bedreigd met gevangenis

"De *human shields* hebben goed werk geleverd, zelfs als sommigen van die vrijwilligers niet begrepen waarom ze op bepaalde locaties werden ingezet terwijl ze aan de hospitalen wilden staan. Maar voor wie een beetje begrijpt hoe volksgezondheid werkt, is het uiterst logisch dat de Irakezen de voedselopslagplaatsen of de water- en elektriciteitsvoorzieningen wilden laten beschermen. Ik probeerde sommigen dat te doen inzien.

Diegenen die uit de VS kwamen kunnen niet meer terug zonder dat ze de gevangenis riskeren! Zo was er Tom, een van de *human shields*, die voorzitter is van een organisatie voor de verdediging van politieke gevangenen in de VS. Hij vertelde dat er al veel anti-oorlogsactivisten in de cel zitten."



Plunderaars met een buitenlands accent

"Ik bezocht vele hospitalen. Vele werden geplunderd. Maar niet dat waar een gekwetste buitenlandse journalist werd verzorgd, dat werd goed beschermd. Idem voor de ambassades: die van Frankrijk en Duitsland werden geplunderd, maar niet die van de VS of van Groot-Brittannië. Alle ministeries werden geplunderd maar niet dat van petroleum... Ook de openbare bedrijven werden geplunderd,

wat de privatisering van de economie makkelijker zal maken.

Het VS-leger heeft op zijn minst de plunderingen laten gebeuren, om chaos te creëren: we hebben foto's bij waar je de GI's passief ziet toekijken bij de ingang van gebouwen die men aan het plunderen is. Maar de Irakezen zegden me dat die plunderaars Arabisch spraken met een vreemd accent. Die moeten zijn meegekomen met de Amerikanen. En natuurlijk zijn er ook inwoners uit de buurt die van de gelegenheid hebben geprofiteerd... Voor ik vertrok had een Iraakse vrouw die in België woont me gezegd dat er zeker volksmenners in de arme wijk van Saddam City zouden zitten."



Als ik dan zie hoe ze hier Kind en Gezin kapot maken...

"Ik moet hulde brengen aan de Iraakse gezondheidswerkers. Ze leveren ontzaglijk veel werk. Hoewel het hen aan zowat ontbreekt. Met name door toedoen van de Uno-sancties. Zo waren ze verplicht naalden en overschotjes hechtingsdraad te hergebruiken. We hadden nauw contact met de dokters. We moedigden hen aan met onze verhalen over de mensen die hier tegen de oorlog vechten. Soms maakten we grapjes, om hen wat te ontspannen.

Het gezondheidssysteem zit heel goed in elkaar in Irak. De minister van Gezondheid legde ons de prioriteiten uit: eerst garanderen dat er water en elektriciteit is. Dan de eerste hulp. Dan een koude zone anders kun je geen vaccins bewaren. Dan de dispensaria. Dan de hospitalen en daarna de gespecialiseerde hospitalen. Als ik zie hoe de Belgische overheid bezig is de basisgezondheidszorg af te breken die wordt geleverd door Kind en Gezin, waar ik raadplegingen hou,

dat is precies het tegenovergestelde..."

Rechtstreeks vanaf het standbeeld van Saddam

"Ik was er bij op het plein toen het beroemde standbeeld van Saddam Hoessein omver werd gehaald. Een echte encensering. Ik zag ook de Amerikaanse journalist die er samen met wat Irakezen als figuranten moest optreden. Er waren hooguit een paar tientallen mensen op het

plein. Maar de camera's filmde niet de massa's andere mensen die stonden te huilen, voor hen was dat als een verkrachting.

De eerste dagen dat ik in Bagdad was, had ik een echte betoging gezien : duizenden mensen, dynamisch, strijdbaar, met slogans tegen de VS. Na de bezetting heb ik alleen de plundersaars "good America" horen roepen. Tientallen anderen heb ik moeten troosten. Mensen van wie ik nooit zou gedacht hebben dat ze zouden staan huilen. Iemand van de oppositie zij me: "Mijn probleem met Saddam is mijn probleem, niet dat van de Amerikanen."



GI's: gedrogeerde, gevaarlijke jongens

"De Amerikaanse soldaten waren monsterlijk. Ze stonden voor een hospitaal zonder elektriciteit en ik vroeg dat ze hun generator zouden lenen of zelfs maar een zaklamp zodat de dokter licht zou hebben om wonden dicht te naaien. Ze antwoorden me zelfs niet.

Dat was vaak het geval. Ik het begin riepen we "babykillers" maar na een tijdje beslisten we met hen te praten. De meesten zijn erg, erg jong. Ik zei hen dat ik hun moeder kon zijn. De meesten zaten duidelijk onder de drugs. Ik woon in Charleroi, ik herken dat meteen. In bepaalde dorpen zijn trouwens drugsputten terug gevonden. Die soldaten, daar kreeg je geen woord uit. De anderen spraken alleen in slogans.

Ze dachten dat ze met bloemen zouden worden ontvangen maar ze zijn bang in Bagdad. Ze zijn gevaarlijk ook. We voelden dat ze in staat waren op ons te schieten bij de minste verkeerde beweging."

Proces tegen generaal Tommy Franks

Colette Moulaert en de drie andere dokters die naar Bagdad gingen, treden op als vertolkers van de Iraakse slachtoffers en spannen een rechtszaak in tegen Tommy Franks, opperbevelhebber van het Amerikaans leger in Irak. Ze baseren zich op de wet op de universele bevoegdheid van 1993, die het mogelijk maakt zware inbreuken op het humanitair recht gepleegd in andere landen in België te vonnissen. De vier dokters zamelden getuigenissen in, legt advocaat Jan Fermon uit, die bewijzen dat er duidelijke overtredingen van de conventie van Genève zijn geweest: clusterbommen, gerichte bombardementen tegen burgerdoelwitten, het gedrag van de bezettingstroepen bij de plunderingen van de ziekenhuizen...

De recente wetwijziging die de westerse leiders uit de wind tracht te zetten, maakt het indienen van de klacht moeilijker. Daarom is de klacht gericht tegen een militaire verantwoordelijke en niet tegen de Amerikaanse politieke leiders. Voor Jan Fermon zal de manier waarop het federaal parket de marge gebruikt die in de nieuwe wet gelaten worden, een test zijn voor de toepasbaarheid ervan. "Als het federaal parket geen onderzoek wil instellen, dan zullen de dingen duidelijk zijn."

Rense.com

Iraqi Wounded Suffer In Agony In Hospitals

News24.com - South Africa

4-22-3

BASRA - Patients are being left to suffer in agony due to a critical shortage of key drugs in Basra's hospitals, where the pay system for doctors has all but collapsed, senior health officials said on Monday.

Drugs for cancer, chronic illnesses including hypertension, and asthma are in short supply while there is even a lack of basic pain killers.

One medic in the burns unit of Basra General Hospital said that shortages of pain killers and equipment like gauze meant that victims who might otherwise be saved, were likely to die.

"We have no pain medication, no morphine, no way to treat their wounds," said the doctor who declined to be named. "Anyone with more than 40% burns on their body will die."

Medics attended to 13-year-old Abas Hasan, who had suffered burns in an accident from a previously unexploded mortar, but the doctor held out little prospect of recovery.

"He has a major infection and has burns over 50% of his body. There is nothing we can do."

Colonel John Graham, the British army's chief medic in Iraq, said local health officials had identified a lack of drugs as one of the main problems facing the health care system.

"The hospitals have supplies of most medicines, but there are critical shortages in cytotoxic drugs (for cancer) and there is a shortage of drugs for chronic illnesses," Graham said.

The dusty climate in Iraq meant that chronic illnesses such as asthma were particular prevalent, he added.

Dr Mustafa Khodair, the director of the general hospital, said many of the drugs needed for chronic illnesses had been stolen from warehouses during

looting which followed Basra's fall to the British two weeks ago.

"There are no cancer drugs and we cannot treat the patients without them," he added.

Graham has been in contact with the directors of all the city's hospitals to assess needs, with the British now in charge of the day-to-day administration of Basra.

'Medical economy' a new problem

The lack of quality drinking water remained a problem, but was being overtaken on the list of priorities by security and salaries for staff, he said.

Doctors had supplemented their basic wage through a complex system of charging for drugs. That has since broken down and many doctors and nurses were not even receiving basic salaries any more.

"The medical economy which had been working - charging for drugs at four different rates - that has now been upset and disrupted."

Khodair said the basic salaries of doctors often accounted for no more than three dollars a month.

"The salaries of doctors is nothing. We do not like our pay system. It is very, very complicated. We want our services to be free to the patients if we can," he said.

Graham acknowledged that the general hospital faced the most severe problems.

"The general hospital is of course the largest and serves the poorest part of the population... (but) is the least modern."

Nevertheless, he was impressed by the health service's ability to keep going despite the impact of war and Saddam Hussein's rule.

"The medical service is the only piece of the civilian infrastructure that has survived and we need to protect it."

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Home > News > World > Middle East

Americans accused of turning blind eye to killings by Kurds

By Kim Sengupta in Kirkuk

23 April 2003

A bitter conflict is unfolding in northern Iraq between two minority communities, with the Americans accused of turning a blind eye to killings and ethnic cleansing.

The Kurds, the victims of oppression by Saddam Hussein and previous regimes in Baghdad, are being blamed for a violent campaign of intimidation against the Turkoman population. Organisations representing the Turkomans say they want British and European troops to protect them because the Americans are acquiescing in what is taking place.

Kirkuk, a city with a history of communal violence, is a focal point of the struggle.

The richest oil wells in the country are near by.

About 5,000 American troops moved into Mosul yesterday to take control of another strategic flashpoint in northern Iraq, where well-armed Arab, Kurdish and Turkoman factions are vying for power. The retired US general in charge of rebuilding Iraq, Jay Garner, travelled to Dukan in northern Iraq for talks with the main Kurdish leaders and promised that the new government would be a "mosaic" representing "all the Iraqi people".

In Kirkuk, *peshmerga* fighters of Jalal Talabani's PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan) and Massoud Barzani's KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party), Turkoman militia, armed Arab fighters and US forces form a combustible mixture. Eleven people are reported to have been killed and more than 50 injured in the past 10 days. Dozens of families, mainly Turkoman but some of them Arab, are said to have been driven from their homes by Kurds.

There is also friction between the Kurdish groups. The KDP accuses the PUK of breaking an agreement and bringing fighters into Kirkuk. They say this has forced them to call in their own *peshmerga*.

The Turkomans claim they form 65 per cent of the population of 600,000 in greater Kirkuk, that the Arabs form 25 per cent and the rest are Kurds and Assyrians. But the Kurds insist that they are the majority. All the communities say they have received little benefit from the region's oil.

The Turkomans, who settled in Mesopotamia from the 11th century, have suffered harsh treatment. The British, after occupying Iraq in 1918, tried to force them to assimilate into Kurdish and Arab societies. There were massacres of Turkomans by Iraqi forces in 1924 and 1959, and successive Baath regimes dispersed Turkomans and the Kurds from the area. They replaced them with Arabs from the south and east.

The PUK and the KDP say that Kirkuk and the neighbouring city of Mosul must be part of any future Kurdish autonomous region. They have kept their *peshmergas* in both cities, purportedly to help the Americans with security.

"But their real role is to harass and attack us. They want to kill us or drive us out," said Mohammed Kemal Yaycili, an executive officer of the Turkoman Front. "We have had a series of attacks as soon as the war ended and the Kurds moved in. The Americans said ... they had asked the Kurds to leave, but nothing happened. When we complained to [them] about the attack, nothing happened either. The Americans favour the Kurds. They are working hand in hand."

Mr Yaycili, who was until recently the London representative of the organisation, added: "We believe the aim of the PUK and the KDP is to drive out enough Turkomans so that we are no longer the majority. Then, no doubt, they will resume fighting each other like they have always done."

At the KDP's offices, Mohammed Kamal Salah admitted there had been killings of Turkomans. "But that is a problem

http://news.independent.co.uk/low_res/story.jsp?story=399572&host=3&dir=75

23-4-03

between them and the PUK. The PUK brought armed men into here, which is a breach of the agreement we had with them. But let us get one thing clear, the Kurds are the majority here, not the Turkomans."

Also in Middle East

Americans accused of turning blind eye to killings by Kurds

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Our Readers Most Forwarded
Article of the Week

**'A Chill Wind is Blowing
In This Nation...'**
by Tim Robbins

Wednesday, April 23, 2003

Headlines

 E-MAIL TO A FRIEND

Published on Thursday, April 17, 2003 by the [Guardian/UK](#)

Scientists Urge Shell Clear-Up to Protect Civilians

Royal Society spells out dangers of depleted uranium
by Paul Brown

Hundreds of tons of depleted uranium used by Britain and the United States in Iraq should be removed to protect the civilian population, the Royal Society said yesterday, contradicting Pentagon claims it was not necessary.

The society's statement fuels the controversy over the use of depleted uranium (DU), which is an effective tank destroyer and bunker buster but is believed by many scientists to cause cancers and other severe illnesses.

The society, Britain's premier scientific institution, was incensed because the Pentagon had claimed it had the backing of the society in saying DU was not dangerous.

In fact, the society said, both soldiers and civilians were in short and long term danger. Children playing at contaminated sites were particularly at risk.

DU is left over after uranium is enriched for use in nuclear reactors and is also recovered after reprocessing spent nuclear fuel. There are thousands of tonnes of it in stores in the US and UK.

Because it is effectively free and 20% heavier than steel, the military experimented with it and discovered it could penetrate steel and concrete much more easily than conventional weapons. It burns at 10,000C, incinerating everything as it turns to dust.

As it proved so effective, it was adopted as a standard weapon in the first Gulf war despite its slight radioactive content and toxic effects. It was used again in the Balkans and Afghanistan by the US.

DU has been suspected by many campaigners of causing the unexplained cancers among Iraqi civilians, particularly children, since the previous Gulf war. Chemicals released in the atmosphere during bombing could equally be to blame.

Among those against the use of DU is Professor Doug Rokke, a one time US army colonel who is also a former director of the Pentagon's depleted uranium project, and a former professor of environmental science at Jacksonville University. He has said a nation's military personnel cannot wilfully contaminate any other nation, cause harm to persons and the environment and then ignore the consequences of their actions. He has called on the US and UK to "recognize the immoral consequences of their actions and assume responsibility for medical care and thorough environmental remediation".

The UN Environment Programme has been tracking the use of DU in the Balkans and found it leaching into the water table. Seven years after the conflict it has recommended the decontamination of buildings where DU dust is present to protect the civilian population against cancer.

Up to 2,000 tonnes of DU has been used in the Gulf, a large part of it in cities like Baghdad, far more than in the Balkans. UNEP has offered to go to Iraq and check on the quantities of DU still present and the danger it poses to civilians.

Professor Brian Spratt, chairman of the Royal Society working group on depleted uranium, said that a recent study by the society had found that the majority of soldiers were unlikely to be exposed to dangerous levels of depleted uranium during and after its use on the battlefield.

"However, a small number of soldiers might suffer kidney damage and an increased risk of lung cancer if substantial amounts of depleted uranium are breathed in, for instance inside an armored vehicle hit by a depleted uranium penetrator."

He said the study also concluded that the soil around the impact sites of depleted uranium penetrators may be heavily contaminated, and could be harmful if swallowed by children for example.

"In addition, large numbers of corroding depleted uranium penetrators embedded in the ground might pose a long-term threat if the uranium leaches into water supplies.

"We recommend that fragments of depleted uranium penetrators should be removed, and areas of contamination should be identified and, where necessary, made safe."

He added: "We also recommend long-term sampling, particularly of water and milk, to detect any increase in uranium levels in areas where depleted uranium has been used. This provides a cost-effective method of monitoring sensitive components in the environment, and of providing information about uranium levels to concerned local populations."

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Explosie munitie zet kwaad bloed in Bagdad

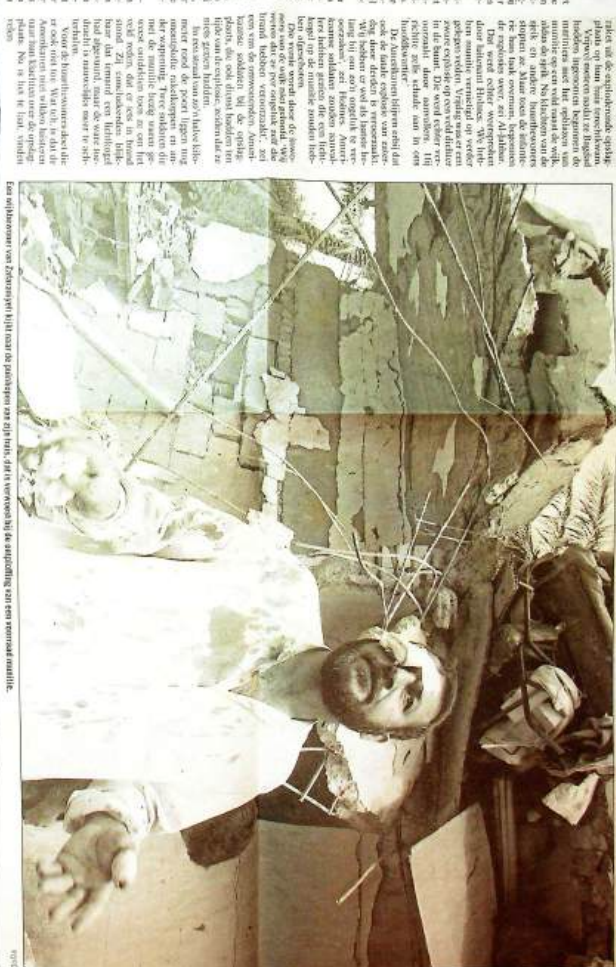
Irakse burgers geven Amerikaanse militairen de schuld van fatale onthoofding

Vrijdag 24 april 2003

De Amerikaanse leger probeert de schuld van een fatale onthoofding van een Iraakse burger te verschuiven op de militairen van Bagdad. De Amerikaanse leger probeert de schuld van een fatale onthoofding van een Iraakse burger te verschuiven op de militairen van Bagdad.

De Amerikaanse leger probeert de schuld van een fatale onthoofding van een Iraakse burger te verschuiven op de militairen van Bagdad. De Amerikaanse leger probeert de schuld van een fatale onthoofding van een Iraakse burger te verschuiven op de militairen van Bagdad.

De Amerikaanse leger probeert de schuld van een fatale onthoofding van een Iraakse burger te verschuiven op de militairen van Bagdad. De Amerikaanse leger probeert de schuld van een fatale onthoofding van een Iraakse burger te verschuiven op de militairen van Bagdad.



Een onthoofde van Zakarjia bij de poort van de stad. De onthoofde is verwond bij de aanval op de stad. De onthoofde is verwond bij de aanval op de stad.

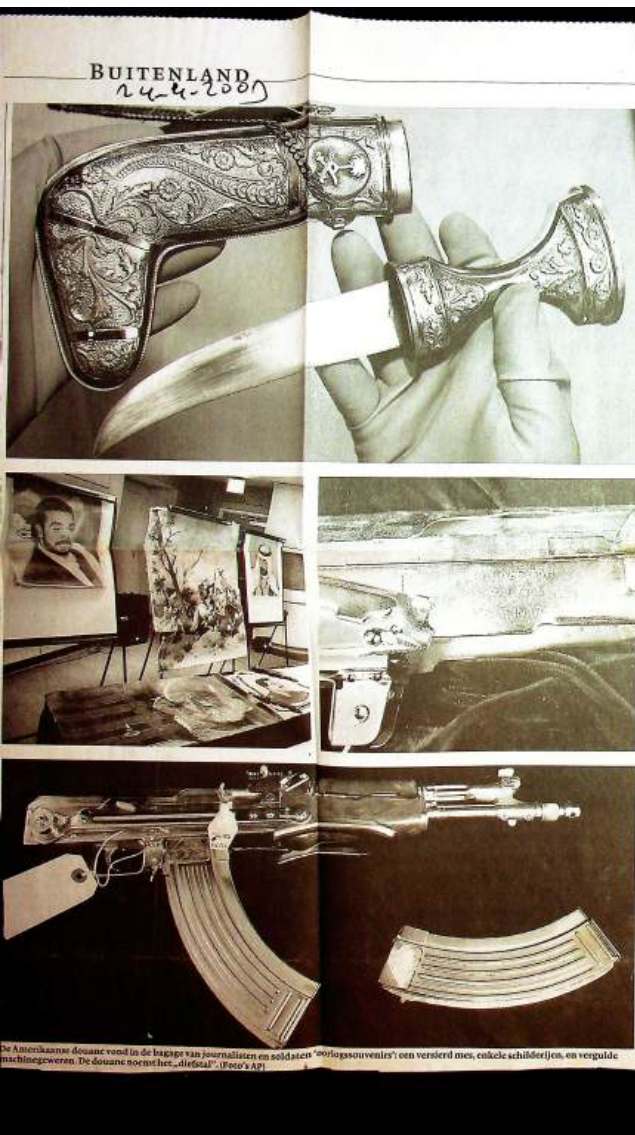
Amerikanen smokkelen schilderijen Irak met 24-4-03
WASHINGTON - Een technische medewerker van de Amerikaanse zender Fox News en een verslaggever van de krant Boston Herald zijn op Amerikaanse vliegtuigen aangehouden omdat ze Iraakse kunstvoorwerpen in hun bagage hadden. De werknemer van Fox News had twaalf schilderijen uit een presidentiële bibliotheek in Bagdad in zijn bagage. De afgekopieerde zijn ook goederen ponskopen aangetroffen bij onder meer een Amerikaanse militair die terugkeerde uit Irak. (ANP)

Media nemen buit mee

WASHINGTON, 24 APRIL. De Amerikaanse douane heeft een medewerker van televisiezender Fox aangehouden wegens het smokkelen van uit Irak afkomstige schilderijen en wapens. Ook enkele andere journalisten werden verdacht van smokkel. Vijf Amerikaanse soldaten zijn in Irak gearresteerd wegens diefstal.

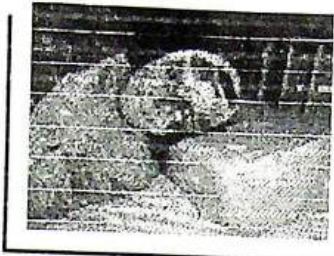
De man, die voor Fox News Channel als satelliettechnicus tijdens de oorlog in Irak aanwezig was, heeft zeker twaalf schilderijen gestolen uit een van de paleizen van Uday Hussein, een van de zonen van Saddam. Het zijn voorname afbeeldingen van de Iraakse leider. De schilderijen waren een cadeau voor zijn werkgever, zo zei de man bij zijn aanhouding. Hij is inmiddels door Fox News ontslagen.

De Amerikaanse douane meldt dat ook andere militairen en andere journalisten zich schuldig maken aan smokkel. De afgelopen week werden vergulde wapens, messen en andere oorlogssouvenirs aangehouden in bagage uit Irak. Ook op de Britse luchthaven Heathrow werden smokkelers aangehouden. De buit heeft vol-



De Amerikaanse douane vond in de bagage van journalisten en soldaten "oorlogssouvenirs": een versierd mes, enkele schilderijen, en vergulde machinegeweren. De douane noemt het "diefstal". (Foto's AP)

BUITENLAND
24-4-2003



Outrage in Baghdad by April Hurley, MD

24 March 2003

In America, the alert goes: If you're not outraged, you're not paying attention.

In Baghdad, at Al Kindi Hospital Emergency, Fatima Abdullah is screaming in outrage: "Why do you do this to us??!"

Her 8 year old, Fatehah is dead, two other daughters are on stretchers wounded by a missile that crushed her uncle's home where they were staying outside Baghdad, near the Diala Bridge. An extended farming family, they have suffered with sanctions and economic devastation shrinking their stock of animals to one cow, a donkey and chickens; they are barely able to feed themselves.

Muhammed, the four year old crying in her arms has cuts from shrapnel and debris crisscrossing the right side of his face and head, eyelids swollen shut.

Nada Adnan, 13 years old and a student at high school for girls, states "I wish that God would take Bush. Why did he do this to us? to me?". She has an open gash on her right cranium with underlying fracture and a large, deep shrapnel gauged cut into her upper left thigh. She has no narcotic relief and cries out as aides press gauze into her leg wound. 9 year old, Rana Adnan needs oxygen for a chest laceration and lung contusion with a concussion, head laceration, shrapnel in her left arm.

<http://www.iraqpeaceteam.org/pages/diaries.html>

27-3-03

Diaries

pagina 6 van 11

And then there is Nahla Harbi who was a passenger driving away from Baghdad with her two year old in her arms when a military school for boys was hit and the explosion rolled the car fracturing both of her legs. Her child sustained head injuries.

Less than 100 meters from Alyermouk Hospital and a school, bombing crushed the foot of 28 year old man who was walking outside his home.

And the list keeps going on. A 70 year old man shopping for food for his family now has a compound fracture of his left upper arm, chest wound through his lung requiring a chest tube and making answers and complaints more difficult.

He has rage and opinions, just as the multitude of families do these several days. How can I explain reasons to them? They know that Bush's Administration is interested in oil control and that they have no interest in democracy for these people. Why don't Americans know this? Why did we elect this man without human feelings, they ask.

It's not easy being an American in a Baghdad Emergency room seeing victims and their families. I wish that George Bush was here with his answers to their outrage.

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April 29, 2003

Closing Down the Press

Did the US Murder Journalists?

By ROBERT FISK

April 26 / 27, 2003

Elaine Cassel
The Other War: Bush, Ashcroft and the End of Civil Liberties

Saul Landau
Iraq War: a Policy of Christian and Jewish Fundamentalism

What is a journalist's life worth? I ask this question for a number of reasons, some of them--frankly--quite revolting. Two days ago, I went to visit one of my colleagues wounded in the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq. Samia Nakhoul is a Reuters correspondent, a young woman reporter who is married to another colleague, the Financial Times correspondent in Beirut. Part of an American tank shell was embedded in her brain--a millimetre difference in entry point and she would have been half paralysed--after an M1A1 Abrams tank fired a round at the Reuters office in

William A. Cook
Sharon Recruits US as
Mercenaries Against
Syria

William S. Lind
Now the Real War Starts

John Chuckman
In Jesus's Name:
Franklin Graham's
Christian Empire

David MacMichael and
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Violence Against Peace
Activists and Dock
Workers

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Anthony Gancarski
Nader Plays Pullman

Scott Handleman
The Mumia Abu-Jamal
Case in Its True Colors

Claud Cockburn
Evelyn Waugh's Ear
Trumpet

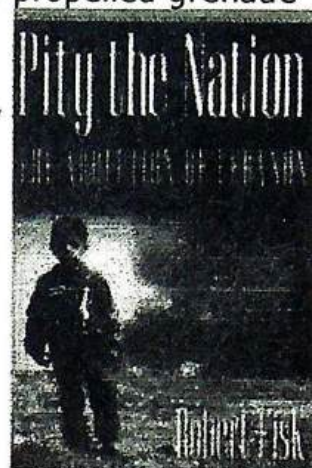
Baghdad, in the Palestine Hotel, last week.

Samia, a brave and honourable lady who has reported the cruelty of the Lebanese civil war at first hand for many years, was almost destroyed as a human being by that tank crew.

At the time, General Buford Blount of the 3rd Infantry Division, told a lie: he said that sniper fire had been directed at the tank--on the Jomhouriyyah Bridge over the Tigris river--and that the fire had ended "after the tank had fired" at the Palestine Hotel. I was between the tank and the hotel when the shell was fired. There was no sniper fire--nor any rocket-propelled grenade fire, as the American officer claimed--at the time. French television footage of the tank, running for minutes before the attack, shows the same thing. The soundtrack--until the blinding, repulsive golden flash from the tank barrel--is silent.

Samia Nakhoul wasn't the only one to be hit. Her Ukrainian cameraman, father of a small child, was killed. So was a Spanish cameraman on the floor above. And then yesterday I had to read, in the New York Times, that Colin Powell had justified the murder--yes, murder--of these two journalists. This former four-star general--I'm talking about Mr Powell, not the liar who runs the 3rd Infantry Division--actually said, and I quote: "According to a US military review of the incident, our forces responded to hostile fire appearing to come from a location later identified as the Palestine Hotel... Our review of the April 8th incident indicates that the use of force was justified."

But it gets worse. A few hours before I visited Samia, I was in Beirut with Mohamed Jassem al-Ali, the managing director of the Qatar-based Arab al-Jazeera channel. On that same day--8 April--that the American tank fired at the Reuters office in Baghdad, an American aircraft fired a missile at the al-Jazeera office in Baghdad. Mr al-



Poets' Basement
Matt Simon, Sam
Hamod, Hammond
Guthrie and Stew Albert

Steve Perry
Bush's War Web Log
4/26

April 25, 2003

David Vest
It's Not the Oil; It's the
Art!

Steven Higgs
All About Tucker Carlson

Walt Brasch
The Shock and Awe of
American Ignorance

Alexander Cockburn
The Decline of American
Journalism: the Case of
Judy Miller

Zeynep Toufe
A Letter to the People of
Iraq from an Anti-War
Activist

CounterPunch Wire
Season of the Witch:
Jeane Kirkpatrick
Unbound

Hammond Guthrie
Springtime in Iraq

Steve Perry
Bush's War Web Log
4/25

Website of the Day
Having a Great Time,
Wish You Were Here:

Ali has given me a copy of his letter to Victoria Clarke, the US Assistant Secretary of State of Defence for Public Affairs in Washington, sent on 24 February this year. In the letter, he gives the address and the map coordinates of the station's office in Baghdad--Lat: 33.19/29.08, Lon 44.24/03.63--adding that civilian journalists would be working in the building.

The Americans were outraged at al-Jazeera's coverage of the civilian victims of US bombing raids. And on 8 April, less than three hours before the Reuters office was attacked, an American aircraft fired a single missile at the al-Jazeera office _ at those precise map coordinates Mr al-Ali had sent to Ms Clarke--and killed the station's reporter Tareq Ayoub. "We find these events," Mr al-Ali wrote in his slightly inaccurate English, "unjustifiable, unacceptable, arousing all forms of anger and rejection and most of all need an explanation."

And what did he get? Victoria Clarke wrote a letter that was as inappropriate as it was "economical with the truth". She offered her "condolences" to the family and colleagues of Mr Ayoub and then went on to write a preachy note to al-Jazeera. "Being close to the action means being close to danger," she wrote. "...we have gone to extraordinary [sic] lengths in Iraq to avoid civilian casualties. Unfortunately, even our best efforts will not prevent some innocents from getting caught in the crossfire [sic]... Sometimes this results in tragedy. War by its very nature is tragic and sad..."

Pardon me? Al-Jazeera asks why its office was targeted and Ms Clarke tells the dead man's employer that war is "sad"? I don't believe this. General Blount lied about his tank crew on the Tigris river. "General" Powell went along with this lie. And now Ms Clarke--who clearly was told to write what she wrote since her letter is so trite--does not even attempt to explain why an American jet killed Al Jazeera's reporter (just like an American missile was fired at Al Jazeera's office in Kabul in 2001).

A Ukrainian, a Spaniard, an Arab. They all died

Postcards from a War

April 24, 2003

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Rumsfeld on the Child
Detainees at
Guantanamo

Uri Avnery

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David Lindorff

Day Care in the Name of
National Security? About
Those Kids in Camp X-
Ray

John Grebe

Rev. Pat Robertson's
Message in the Temple

Dokhi Fassihian

Monster.Com: Ethnic
Cleansing on the Web?

CounterPunch Wire

Israeli Army Chief
Threatens Peace Activists

Sam Hamod

Our Man in Baghdad

Annie C. Higgins

Do You Regret Being an
American?

Harold A. Gould

Will They Hate Us
Forever?

Stew Albert

Big Brother in Bed

Steve Perry

within hours of each other. I suspect they were killed because the US--someone in the Pentagon though not, I'm sure, Ms Clarke--decided to try to "close down" the press. Of course, American journalists are not investigating this. They should--because they will be next.

As for Mohamed al-Ali, he has the painful experience of knowing that he gave the Pentagon the map coordinates to kill his own reporter. Who was the pilot of the American jet that fired that missile at al-Jazeera? Why did he fire? What were the coordinates? Who was the American tank officer who blasted a piece of metal into Samia's brain? A day after he fired, I climbed on his tank and asked the soldier on top if he was responsible. "I don't know anything about that, sir," he replied. And I believe him. Like I believe in Father Christmas and fairies at the bottom of my garden.

Yesterday's Features

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John Chuckman

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Robert Sandels

Cuba Crackdown: a Revolt Against Bush's National

Amerikanen doden 14 demonstranten in Irak

Schietpartij in soennitisch Falluja wekt woede onder bevolking

The Guardian, AP, Reuters
FALLUJA

Volgens de Amerikanen was het zelfverdediging, volgens de meeste inwoners van Falluja was het moord. Wat vaststaat is dat veertien Irakezen dood waren en dat er zeventien gewonden in het ziekenhuis lagen nadat Amerikaanse militairen hadden geschoten op een menigte demonstranten.

De bloedigste schietpartij in Irak sinds de val van Saddam Hussein voltrok zich maandagavond in Falluja, een overwegend soennitische stad 65 kilometer ten westen van Bagdad. De demonstranten schreeuwden leuzen naar de Amerikaanse paratroepen, die hun intrek hadden genomen in een schoolgebouw.

Volgens sommige verantwoordelijke inwoners waren de demonstranten scholieren (zes van de doden waren kinderen) die hun school terug wilden. Volgens anderen hadden gelovige moslims zich geërgerd aan de Amerikanen, die hun vrouwen door veldkijkers zouden hebben begluurd.

Toen de betoging de school naderde, werd er ineens geschoten. Volgens sommige inwoners waren het schoten in de lucht, uit vreugde over de verjaardag van Saddam Hussein die gisteren werd gevierd. Maar de Amerikanen waren ervan overtuigd dat ze werden beschoten.

'We zagen drie mannen op het dak aan de overkant die op de school schoten', vertelde een Amerikaanse sergeant. 'We hadden geen andere keus dan terugschieten', zei een overste. Een soldaat erkende dat de Amerikanen niet alleen met M4-geweren, maar ook met machinegeweren op de menigte hadden geschoten.

In de noordelijke stad Mosul gaf Saddams verjaardag aanleiding tot een vuurgevecht tussen Amerikaanse militairen en gewapende Saddam-aanhangers. Ook hier werden de Amerikanen naar eigen zeggen vanuit een menigte beschoten. Zes vermoedelijke leden van een Saddam-militie kwamen om het leven.

Een naaste medewerker van Saddam Hussein, minister van Olie Amer Mohammed Rashid, heeft zich overgegeven. Rashid stond nummer 47 op de lijst van meest gezochte Irakezen. Hij was lid van de Militaire Industrialisatieorganisatie, de instantie die verantwoordelijk was voor de productie van wapens.

Rashid wordt ervan verdacht betrokken te zijn geweest bij de gifgasaanvallen op Koerdische dorpen aan het eind van de jaren tachtig. Hij is getrouwd met de microbiologe Rihab Taha, die aan het hoofd stond van Saddams geheime biologische laboratoria.



Inwoners van Falluja gluren in een met kogels doorzefde auto bij een school van waaruit Amerikaanse militairen een menigte demonstranten hebben beschoten.

FOTO AP

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by Tim Robbins

Monday, May 05, 2003

Headlines

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Published on Saturday, May 3, 2003 by the San Francisco Chronicle

How Many Iraqis Died? We May Never Know

Some observers are pressuring Pentagon to put forth an informed estimate

by Edward Epstein

WASHINGTON — The world will never know how many Iraqis died in the war to oust Saddam Hussein, in part because the United States adamantly refuses to estimate the number of people it kills in combat and because gathering accurate numbers is all but impossible after the Iraqi government's chaotic collapse.

What Bush administration officials do say is that the U.S. operation in Iraq included unprecedented efforts to minimize civilian casualties. That humanitarian stance has increased pressure on the Pentagon to abandon its long-held refusal to publicly offer numbers of civilians or enemy military personnel killed, as a way of showing if the use of precision-guided bombs and missiles and rules designed to avoid civilian targets have reduced so-called collateral damage.

"We don't do body counts," Gen. Tommy Franks, who directed the Iraq invasion, has said.

In his speech aboard the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln, President Bush saluted a U.S. military operation that he said went out of its way to protect Iraqi civilians. "With new tactics and precision weapons, we can achieve military objectives without directing violence against civilians. No device of man can remove the tragedy from war, yet it is a great advance when the guilty have far more to fear from war than the innocent," he said.

The historical reluctance to estimate civilian or even military losses stems from a widespread belief that it would be all but impossible to separate casualties caused by American action from those caused by the enemy. As for military losses, the military's bitter experience with charges of inflated body counts during the Vietnam War has soured the Pentagon on even offering estimates of enemy killed, missing or wounded.

Among those who think the Pentagon should make an informed estimate of Iraqi casualties is Beth Osborne Daponte, a demographer at Carnegie Mellon University who studied casualties from the 1991 Gulf War.

"The Pentagon should be interested in the impact of its intervention on the population," she said.

The numbers of Iraqis killed is a politically charged figure. Before the war, an estimate that originated with U.N. officials said that 500,000 Iraqis could be killed in the war, and was widely quoted by the war's opponents.

Before it collapsed, the Iraqi government claimed on April 3 that 2,252 civilians had been killed and 5,103 injured. Baghdad fell April 9.

A London-based Web site, www.iraqbodycount.net, has been keeping a running estimate of Iraqi civilian deaths, based on media accounts from the battlefield. Its figures — a minimum of 2,197 deaths to a maximum of 2,670.

The site's researchers required a minimum of two independent media reports about each incident included in the casualty estimates, and its sources ranged from Al Jazeera, the Arab satellite news channel based in Qatar, to the New York Times.

The site's researchers say they feel frustrated that casualties on the losing end of a war often end up faceless and forgotten. "However many civilians are killed in the onslaught on Iraq, their death toll should not go unnoticed by those who are paying, in taxes, for their slaughter," the site says.

The site is based on the work of Marc Herold, a University of New Hampshire economist who conducted a similar running count of Afghan war casualties. He said the Iraqi count is probably too low, since researchers have only included incidents that at least two news organizations reported on.

"Requiring two independent sources is laudable, but in many instances you have a single person at the scene who writes it up in great detail," said Herold.

He estimated that the London counters are probably 10 to 20 percent low in their estimate of civilian deaths.

Retired Army Gen. Robert Scales, a commander in the 1991 Gulf War who later wrote the Army's official history of the conflict, said he doesn't know whether the Web site's figures are right. But he said the just-concluded war was remarkable for the U.S. military's successful focus on avoiding civilian losses.

"A hugely disproportionate number of those who died were intended to die. That's very unusual," he said.

In historical terms, Scales said, civilian losses in Iraq are small. Allied strategic bombing of Germany in World War II killed an estimated 2 million people in a nation with a prewar population of about 80 million.

In Iraq, with about 23 million people, the same proportion of casualties would mean about 575,000 dead civilians.

In her study of the 1991 war, Daponte estimated that 13,000 civilians were killed directly by the U.S.-led campaign, which included a month of bombing before the brief ground war began.

But Herold said the precision and power of today's U.S. munitions don't translate into lower civilian casualties, especially when a war involves urban targets, as in Iraq. He said the "intensity" of civilian casualties — the number of civilians who die for each 10,000 pounds of bombs dropped — is actually rising, especially as more precision weapons are used.

"Even if these bombs hit their targets, you'll kill civilians nearby," he said.

But Anthony Cordesman, a military analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, said in a postwar analysis that the "effects-based" bombing in Iraq, in which air strikes were aimed at producing specific effects rather than scattershot damage, limited civilian losses.

"Even Iraqi claims indicate that the U.S. and U.K. inflicted negligible civilian casualties and collateral damage in historical terms," he wrote.

Herold and Scales agreed on one thing, however. They don't think the Pentagon should estimate the casualties it caused. "Any numbers they produce would be contested," said Herold. "They learned their lesson in Vietnam."

The allies do track their own casualties. So far, 132 American military personnel and 32 British have been killed in Iraq.

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Baghdad battle 'killed 2,300'

May 3 2003

The battle for Baghdad cost the lives of at least 1,101 Iraqi civilians, many of them women and children, according to records at the city's 19 largest hospitals.

The civilian death toll was almost certainly higher.

The hospital records say that another 1,255 dead were "probably" civilians, including many women and children.

Uncounted others who died never made it to hospitals and now are buried in shallow graves that have been dug throughout the city - in cemeteries, back yards, hospital gardens, city parks and mosque grounds.

More than 6,800 civilians were wounded, the hospital records show.

A Pentagon spokesman called even one civilian death too many, but military historians said that, compared with past wars, the death toll was relatively low.

The numbers, gleaned from archives that separated military from civilians, include those killed between March 19, when the US air war began, and April 9, when the city fell to American forces.

The biggest number of deaths appears to have occurred April 5 and 6 when US troops began fighting their way into the city.

At the Shaheed Al Adnan Hospital in central Baghdad, for example, the ledger showed 44 civilian deaths in the first 17 days of the war, then 41 for the last five days, including 24 on April 5 and 12 on April 6.

Iraqi doctors acknowledge that the records may not be perfect.

Although it was a fairly simple task to categorise women and children as civilians, men presented a different challenge, especially in the final days of the war.

Some loyalists to Saddam Hussein reportedly fought in civilian clothes, and some soldiers shed their uniforms in retreat.

But the doctors said they were able to separate military from civilian by relying on age and other factors.

In general, if a person was dressed in civilian clothes and carried no military identification the doctors assumed he was a civilian. They said that many soldiers did present military ID at the hospitals.

The records make no effort to determine whether the dead were killed by American or Iraqi fire, although the doctors believe that US weapons produced most of the casualties.

"Was our record-keeping perfect?" said Dr Basim Al-Shaeli, a general surgeon at Al Kharama in the city's southwest sector.

"During the invasion, I was performing 10 major operations a day, staying here around the clock. While I was doing this, the shooting would be going on, bullets would be crashing into the hospital around us, and we could hear the tanks outside the gates.

"I was performing surgery on an injured neck, an injured head or face, and I was insisting that they be taken home the next day, because the demand for beds was so great, and even so we were always overcrowded. And this wasn't just me; every doctor here worked like this.

"So no, our records are not perfect. But I believe they are accurate."

The Baghdad death toll also does not include the hundreds of civilians who died in other parts of Iraq.

Tabulations have not been made in many of Iraq's cities, but available information indicates hundreds of civilians died during the US assault.

In Najaf, for example, the Najaf Teaching Hospital reported that as of Sunday it had treated 286 civilian dead during the war. During the same period, the hospital counted 57 military dead.

The Bush administration says it will make no effort to tally Iraqi dead, either civilian or military.

The Iraqi Red Crescent Society says it will have no report on civilian deaths ready until mid-May.

So the hospital records provide what appears to be the first credible, if imperfect, starting point for determining how many civilians in the capital perished in the war.

The Red Crescent said these 19 hospitals were the likeliest to have received dead and injured during the war.

The records show 1,101 deaths that doctors felt were clearly those of civilians, 845 of which were recorded at three hospitals - Al Kharama, Al Askan and Yarmuk - near the Baghdad airport.

An additional 1,255 dead probably were civilians, doctors say, all reported at the same three hospitals near the airport. At Al Kharama, 30 per cent of 450 such bodies belonged to women and children, doctors said.

Others were men without identification in civilian clothes who the doctors believed were civilians. But a final determination was not made, in part because of the enormous volume of bodies to be dealt with.

By contrast, 125 American service personnel and 31 British were killed in the entire war. The last official estimate of Iraqi civilian deaths - based on Iraqi government claims before Baghdad fell - totalled about 1,250.

Dr Ameer K Daher, a general surgeon who was trapped near his home by the fighting, recalled that when cluster bombs smashed nearby houses, he and his neighbours set up a field hospital in a secondary school.

"We buried 10 people in the mosque and treated 45 more with what supplies we had in our homes," he said. "We were not the only people forced to do this."

Pentagon spokesman Lt Col James Cassella said "even one civilian death is one civilian death too many."

Others noted that civilian deaths vary widely from war to war. Civilian deaths in the first Gulf War in 1991 were estimated at 3,500 from bombing and other "direct war effects," said Beth Osborne Daponte, a senior research scientist at Carnegie Mellon University. Historic conflicts such as World War II caused millions of civilian deaths.

Mark Burgess, a research analyst with the Centre for Defence Information, an independent think tank in Washington, said the Baghdad numbers appear low when placed in the context of previous civilian death tolls. He cited as examples the US firebombing of Tokyo or the bombing of Dresden, Germany, both during World War II. Those episodes killed tens of thousands.

"Considering the amount of ordnance dropped on Baghdad, it probably could have been a lot worse," he said. "Clearly these are a lot of casualties, and any civilian casualty is regrettable and should be examined, but looking at the number of casualties historically gives us a clearer picture."

American officials have always said that they hoped to minimise civilian casualties, and in the days before US troops moved from Kuwait into Iraq, most troops were given extensive training on so-called rules of engagement intended to minimise civilian casualties.

But in the days after US troops entered Iraq, the lines between Iraqi combatants and civilians blurred as US supply lines came under attack by Iraqi loyalists dressed in civilian clothes. A suicide bombing at an army checkpoint near Najaf that killed four soldiers heightened tensions, as did reports that those loyal to Saddam Hussein were driving white pickup trucks, a vehicle also common among Iraqi civilians. News accounts reported several incidents of US soldiers firing on

cars, only to learn that their occupants were families trying to escape the fighting.

US air bombing maps included several dozen "NFAs," or no-fire areas, in Baghdad, large red circles centred on clearly civilian targets such as hospitals, power plants, hotels, schools and some government ministries.

But Saddam placed his forces in schools, deployed tanks and anti-aircraft artillery in residential neighbourhoods and hid rocket launchers under bridges, knowing the American reluctance to attack such places.

Drive the streets of Baghdad today and it becomes clear that the city is not London or Berlin after World War II, where bombing destroyed large stretches. The bombing damage is spotty, occasional.

Still, in many neighbourhoods, residents are quick to point out exactly where American bombs ended the lives of neighbours and friends.

Doctors at several hospitals alleged that some civilians died because American soldiers were not allowing civilian ambulances into neighbourhoods near the battles.

Two pregnant women were killed when an American tank shelled their ambulance on the way to Yarmuk Hospital on April 7, doctors there say. The driver and a doctor along to provide care were both injured. They add that soon afterward, shells hit the hospital's diabetes centre, destroying an entire floor, which volunteer workers have been working to repair since.

Perhaps the most graphic image of the death toll is the 150 graves dug into the garden around the Al Askan Hospital.

- AP

This story was found at: <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/05/03/1051876891254.html>

philly.com

Posted on Sun, May. 04, 2003

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Civilian deaths in Baghdad total at least 1,101

By Matthew Schofield, Nancy A. Youssef and Juan O. Tamayo
Knight Ridder News Service

BAGHDAD - The battle for Baghdad cost the lives of at least 1,101 Iraqi civilians, many of them women and children, according to records at the city's 19 largest hospitals.

The civilian death toll was almost certainly higher. The hospital records say that an additional 1,255 dead were "probably" civilians, including many women and children. Uncounted others never made it to hospitals and now lie in shallow graves throughout the city - in cemeteries, yards, hospital gardens, parks and mosque grounds.

More than 6,800 civilians were wounded, the hospital records show.

A Pentagon spokesman called even one civilian death too many, but military historians said that, compared with past wars, the toll was relatively low.

The numbers, gleaned from archives that separated military from civilians, include those killed between March 19, when the U.S. air war began, and April 9, when the city fell. The largest number appear to have occurred April 5 and 6, when U.S. troops began fighting their way into the city.

At the Shaheed Al Adnan Hospital in central Baghdad, for example, the ledger showed 44 civilian deaths in the first 17 days of the war, then 41 for the last five days, including 24 on April 5 and 12 on April 6.

Iraqi doctors acknowledge that the records may not be perfect. Although it was fairly easy to categorize women and children as civilians, men were a challenge, especially in the final days when some Saddam Hussein loyalists reportedly fought in civilian clothes and soldiers shed their uniforms in retreat.

The doctors said they separated soldier from civilian by relying on age and other factors. In general, if a man was dressed in civilian clothes and carried no military identification, they assumed he was a civilian. They said that many soldiers did present military ID.

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The Baghdad death toll also does not include the hundreds of civilians who died in other parts of Iraq.
<http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/news/front/5778486.htm?template=contentModules/pri> 20-5-03

Tabulations have not been made in many of Iraq's cities, but available information indicates that hundreds of civilians died during the U.S. assault. In Najaf, for example, the Najaf Teaching Hospital reported that it had recorded 286 civilian dead and 57 military dead.

The Bush administration says it will make no effort to tally Iraqi dead, either civilian or military. The Iraqi Red Crescent Society says it will have no report on civilian deaths until mid-May. So the hospital records provide what appears to be the first credible, if imperfect, starting point for determining how many civilians perished in the battle for the capital. The Red Crescent said these 19 hospitals were the likeliest to have received dead and injured.

Most of the deaths in the city occurred in Baghdad's southwest sector, where the Third Infantry Division stormed the international airport April 4 and made a well-publicized foray through Baghdad neighborhoods April 5.

The records show 1,101 deaths that doctors felt were clearly those of civilians, 845 of them recorded at three hospitals - Al Kharama, Al Askan and Yarmuk - near the airport.

An additional 1,255 dead probably were civilians, doctors say, all reported at the same three hospitals. At Al Kharama, 30 percent of 450 such bodies were women and children, doctors said. Others were men without identification in civilian clothes who the doctors believed to be civilians. But a final determination was not made, in part because of the volume of bodies to be dealt with.

By contrast, 137 U.S. service personnel and 33 British have been killed in Iraq. The last official estimate of Iraqi civilian deaths - based on Iraqi government claims before Baghdad fell - totaled about 1,250.

Ameer K. Daher, a general surgeon who was trapped near his home by the fighting, noted that many people never made it to hospitals. He recalled that when cluster bombs smashed nearby houses, he and his neighbors set up a field hospital in a secondary school.

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American officials have always said that they hoped to minimize civilian casualties, and in the days before U.S. troops moved north out of Kuwait, most troops were given extensive training on so-called rules of engagement intended to minimize civilian casualties.

But once troops entered Iraq, the lines between Iraqi combatants and civilians blurred as U.S. supply lines came under attack by fighters wearing civilian clothes. A suicide bombing at an army checkpoint

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Still, in many neighborhoods, residents are quick to point out exactly where American bombs ended the lives of neighbors and friends.

On a recent day, 8-year-old Mustapha Amad lay in a ward of six beds in the Al-Karkh Hospital. On April 6, midafternoon, American jets flew low over his neighborhood. He was hiding in the house and got scared, so he ran out to his uncle.

His mother, Nakam Abd Al Razak, 27, explains that she moved in with her brother during the war because the neighborhood seemed safe. She said her brother lifted Mustapha into his arms and pointed out that the American planes had gone by and that everything was all right now.

"When the planes returned, the bombs killed my uncle," Mustapha said. His own legs were shattered, although doctors believe he may someday be able to walk, if unevenly.

"Three other children near him died, as did one other young man," his mother said, finishing the story. "Another 20 people were hurt."

Doctors at several hospitals alleged that civilians died because U.S. soldiers were not allowing civilian ambulances into neighborhoods near the battles.

In front of the Al Laqa Hospital, which recorded one civilian death, a bullet-pocked ambulance sits on four flat tires. One hospital doctor was shot in the leg when he went into it to try to reach the wounded.

"For all doctors, it was a very difficult time," said Al-Laqa's manager, Dr. K. Al-Naimi. "We could not... get the blood, the medicines, that we needed. At times, there were wounded in the streets, but we could not get to them."

Two pregnant women were killed when a U.S. tank shelled their ambulance on the way to Yarmuk Hospital on April 7, doctors there say. The driver and a doctor along to provide care were both injured. Soon afterward, they add, shells destroyed an entire floor of the hospital's diabetes center.

Perhaps the most graphic image of the death toll is the 150 graves in the garden around the Al Askan Hospital.

"Our halls were full of victims of tanks, of the bombings, of the shooting," Dr. Akeel Maltde said. "Many of their bodies are still here, outside. Anyone can see for themselves."

But there is so much death in this city right now that even that is sometimes asking too much.

An Iraqi family told the Red Crescent last week that they had buried a 10-year-old girl during the war. Red Crescent officials uncovered the body and photographed its disfigured face, then reburied the body and posted the photos, hoping the girl's family would stumble upon her image and claim her body.

They say that is the best they can do.

"Do you know how many people we are trying to help?" said Ali Ismail, who is in charge of the search for the girl's identity. "Every day we find more."

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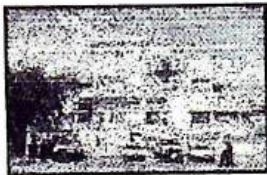
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Iraq descends deeper into turmoil as Red Cross demands to see POWs

Sun May 4, 10:35 AM ET

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BAGHDAD (AFP) - With fear mounting of an impending humanitarian disaster and security worsening, the Inter Committee of the Red Cross demanded access to Iraqi prisoners held by US-British coalition forces.



AFP Photo

"The ICRC still does not have access to all the prisoners and detainees in the court Doumani, the organisation's spokeswoman in Baghdad, told AFP on Sunday.

"The parties must respect the Geneva Convention on prisoners," she pleaded.

US Central Command in Qatar announced Saturday that 342 more POWs had been taking the total number set free to 5,745.

Nearly 3,600 Iraqis prisoners remained in detention.

Doumani said about 2,000 people had been arrested for common law offences in the April 10, the day after coalition forces entered and mass looting erupted.

The ICRC has also been denied access to former senior Iraqi officials who have either been captured by the coalition forces, including deputy prime minister Tareq Aziz.

The UN chief of mission warned that Iraq ([news](#) - [web sites](#)) is still ripe for a humanitarian disaster even though the shooting has all but stopped, noting that too many people were going without food, water and power.

"The conditions for the development of a humanitarian disaster still exist," Ramiro said Saturday.

"It's (already) a humanitarian disaster in the sense basic services have collapsed or are at the risk of collapsing them back into shape rather quickly," he said.

Lopes da Silva, who returned to Baghdad on Thursday with other UN officials who fled two days before the war began on March 20, said nearly two-thirds of Iraqis totally depended on food aid. Malnutrition was rampant.

And the director of British charity Oxfam accused US-led forces of failing to do enough to protect aid workers.

"At the moment it's very high risk for our staff to be in Iraq... that's not good enough," Barbara Stocking told BBC Saturday.

"We need the coalition forces to provide the security, and we need them also to do something about the mines and unexploded ordnance that there is around.

http://news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story2&cid=1514&u=afp/20030504/wl_mideast_afp/ir... 5-5-03

"The occupying power has to provide the security and they are not. That's their legal obligation under the Geneva Conventions," Stocking said.

Despite the presence of 12,000 US soldiers in Baghdad and the planned deployment of up to 4,000 more, security deteriorated in the city where weapons are easily available and an effective police force has yet to be set up.

In Baghdad's Sadr City, a huge Shiite slum of two million people, hospital officials voice fears for their safety.

"There are large numbers of thieves, drug addicts and accounts are being settled," said Dr Samer Salah al-Khatib. "new gangs have appeared."

Several journalists among the hundreds of foreign media in Baghdad have been robbed.

The capital's interim police chief, Zuhair al-Nuaimi, resigned Saturday, saying young blood was needed. He urged cooperation closely with US forces.

Meanwhile, several dozen Iraqis staged a rare rally in Baghdad Sunday to thank the United States for removing Hussein ([news](#) - [web sites](#)).

"Yes, yes for democracy," they chanted in Arabic in front of the Palestine Hotel where many foreign correspondents were gathered.

The demonstration, which also called for the unity between Iraq's Sunni and Shiite Muslims, was organised by the Council for the Liberation of Iraq, a Shiite group whose members claim some support south of Baghdad.

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Rights Watch: Many Forced to Flee Iraq

Sunday May 11, 2003 9:19 PM

AMMAN, Jordan (AP) - Refugees and other foreigners in Iraq - mostly Palestinians - have been fleeing to Jordan because of intimidation and attacks, the U.S.-based Human Rights Watch group said in a report released Sunday.

The international human rights group's 22-page report, which highlights abuses against Iraq's refugees, came as U.S. forces work with Iraqis to restore order following Saddam Hussein's ouster.

Amid rampant looting, vandalism and other crimes, landlords - forced by Saddam to take in Palestinian tenants at discounted rates - have been taking advantage of the chaos by evicting tenants or demanding unrealistic rental increases, the report said.

In other cases, armed groups have threatened foreigners to leave their homes or face violence.

Saddam was seen as a supporter of the Palestinians and their opposition to Israel's occupation of Arab lands. During the 1991 Gulf War, Iraqi forces fired Scud missiles at the Jewish state, drawing praise from Palestinians in the occupied territories.

Peter Bouckaert, a researcher for the group, said "the lack of security endangers everyone in Iraq, but refugees and other foreigners are especially vulnerable."

He criticized U.S.-led coalition forces for doing too little "to ensure the security of anyone in Iraq, let alone these vulnerable populations."

The group's report highlighted stories of Palestinian refugees, including Khairiyya Shafiq Ali and her family, who claim armed groups threatened to kill them if they didn't hand over \$150.

They told her "Saddam is gone, you are nothing here. You own nothing in Iraq. If you want to leave, take only your clothes," according to Human Rights Watch.

Nazima Sulaiman, 50, fled Baghdad with her family after

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unknown attackers threw explosive devices into her house, killing an infant baby and injuring six others, including three of her children, the human rights group said.

From the Associated Press

Also, Iranian Kurds living in a refugee camp west of Baghdad fled to Jordan when police stopped guarding the camp, the group said.

The United Nations refugee agency says some 1,000 Iranian Kurds and 450 Palestinians who fled Baghdad are stranded in a no-man's-land between Jordan and Iraq.

Human Rights Watch criticized Jordanian authorities for not freely admitting the refugees.

"The Palestinians were forced to sign vaguely worded documents permitting their repatriation to Iraq, whereas Iranian refugees have been completely barred from entering Jordan," it said.

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May 12, 2003

These WMD are Right in Front of
Their Noses

America's Dirty Bombs

By DAVE LINDORFF

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May 10 / 11, 2003

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The Pentagon has announced plans to send several thousand specialists into Iraq to join the search for those "weapons of mass destruction" of Saddam Hussein's--remember the ones that Iraq was supposedly brimming over with, and which were the stated reason for America's invasion? But while it is stepping up that effort, the Pentagon says it has no intention to do anything about the consequences of America's own "dirty bomb" campaign against Iraq. Although the U.S. and Britain reportedly dropped as much as 2000

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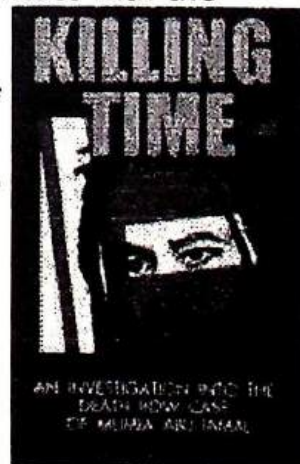
Adam Engel
Flag in the Rain

Poets Basement
Reiss, Guthrie, Hamod &

tons of depleted uranium weapons on Iraq, including in the center of densely populated Baghdad, a Pentagon spokesman last month told the BBC that it has "no plans to do a DU clean-up in Iraq."

Nor is the U.S. allowing inspectors from the U.N. environmental Program into Iraq to look for signs of DU contamination. It seems that just as the U.S. government doesn't want U.N. weapons inspectors to come into Iraq where they might undermine any U.S. claims to have found evidence of Saddam's WMDs, they don't want any U.N. environmental inspectors to come in and find evidence of U.S. use of a weapon that the U.N. has condemned as a weapon of mass destruction.

If U.N. estimates of the quantity of depleted uranium ordinance used in the current war in Iraq are correct, it would mean six times as much of the super-toxic and carcinogenic substance was used this time as in 1991, and already there are disturbing reports of dramatically higher incidences of cancer and birth defects in Southern Iraq following the 1991 war. But at least in that war, virtually all the DU ammo was used against Iraqi armor out in the desert. This time, bunker busting bombs and anti-tank weapons were used in Iraqi cities, including Baghdad, putting in jeopardy tens or hundreds of thousands of civilians who might come in contact with the radioactive dust from those explosions. Of course, U.S. troops, now playing the role of an occupying army in those bombed cities, are also at risk. Many veterans of the last Iraq war suspect that the notorious "Gulf War Syndrome" that many came home with was the result of their having breathed in or ingested uranium dust from the weapons used in that war.



The U.S. has been firing off "dirty bombs" in the form of depleted uranium (DU) weapons now since the 1991 Gulf War against Iraq. Depleted uranium, a radioactive metal that is part of the

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5/10

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Cassel
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of the Dry Drunk

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Bombastic Promise
Keeping

Steve Perry
Bush's War Web Log
5/09

May 8, 2003

Julie Hilden
When It's a Crime to Visit
Your Son

waste stream from nuclear weapons, turns out to be a highly effective armor-piercing material. 1.7 times as dense as lead, it also has the unusual property of self-sharpening: as a rod of the stuff slams into a sheet of steel or a wall of reinforced concrete, instead of mushrooming into a flat, broad projectile that then is slowed or stopped by the obstacle, uranium sheds its exterior layers and becomes sharper as it is propelled by momentum deeper and deeper into its target. Uranium is also highly flammable at the kinds of high temperature generated by a high-velocity collision, and so it incinerates whatever target it hits.

In the 1991 Gulf War, depleted uranium was used extensively in two types of weapons--the 120 mm anti-tank shells fired by Abrams tanks and other anti-tank cannons, and the 30 mm anti-armor guns on the A-10 Warthog ground attack jets. An estimated 300 tons of the stuff was fired off in the Iraqi and Kuwaiti desert during that war. In Kosovo, the same weapons were used, this time reportedly a total of about 12 tons, mostly in the form of small 30 mm projectiles fired by aircraft.

In Afghanistan, in addition to those two kinds of shells, the Pentagon introduced a third category of uranium weapon--the so-called bunker-busting bomb--a depleted uranium "smart bomb" or missile that can burrow deep into the ground or through thick concrete walls to hit heavily shielded shelters or cave hideouts. The Pentagon has not released information about how much depleted uranium was used in weapons in Afghanistan, but estimates have ranged from several hundred tons to as much as 1000 tons--and this was in conflict that was tiny compared to the likely war in Iraq.

Critics of depleted uranium weapons--and these run the gamut from the U.N. World Health Organization to Gulf War veterans groups--note that the new use of uranium bunker buster bombs raises the danger of radioactive contamination dramatically, because of where such bombs get used.

For the most part, anti-tank weapons, at least to

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The Coming Senior
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Huda Ammash

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The Other "F" Word

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God in the Service of the
Security State: a
Dispatch from Brazil

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Pushovers

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5/08

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Department of Sexual
Security

May 7, 2003

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Martinis, Hitchens

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Alienating the World

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Bush's Troubling Speech

date, have been used where tanks are generally deployed, which is out in the open, where population density is low. Although when a depleted uranium round explodes, the uranium is incinerated, becoming a dangerous aerosol of minute inhalable particles of uranium oxide, out in the desert the risks are relatively low of many people becoming contaminated. Absent a wind, most of that radioactive residue settles within 50-100 yards of the target.

Even so, there are reports from both the Basra area of Southern Iraq, where use of depleted uranium shells by British and U.S. forces in 1991 was heavy, and in Afghanistan, of higher than anticipated cancer rates and birth defects. There is also some suspicion that at least some of the cases of what has become known as Gulf War Syndrome among returned U.S. Gulf War veterans is the result of their having inhaled the residue of uranium weapons. Researchers from a British non-profit organization, the Uranium Medical Research Center, for example, claim that during an investigation of bombed areas in Kabul and especially Jalalabad, Afghanistan, they encountered widespread evidence of illnesses and birth defects which they said were consistent with uranium poisoning and radioactive contamination. They also reported finding elevated levels of uranium in the vicinity. They called their findings "shocking". Similar findings have been claimed in the area around southern Iraq where uranium anti-tank weapons were widely used.

But these reports of dirty bomb aftereffects could be dwarfed once reports start coming in of the effects of DU contamination in urban areas of Iraq. For one thing, the amount of uranium vaporized in an explosion of one bunker busting bomb would be vastly greater than any anti-tank shell. There are, for example, only about three kilograms of uranium in 120mm anti-tank round.

But the DU explosive charges in the guided bomb systems used in Afghanistan and now Iraq (for example Raytheon's Bunker Buster - GBU-28) reportedly can weigh as much as one and a half metric tons. Besides, U.S. troops, which had to fight their way into Baghdad and other heavily

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Bush's War Web Log
5/07

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Military Records

May 6, 2003

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Trenches: an Interview
with Gretta Duisenberg

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Defense of Bill Bennett

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Bush's War on Jesus

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W. Bush: the Little Snot,
the Little Bully

Robert Fisk
Bush Says the War is
Over: Tell It to the Shi'a

Kathleen Christison
A Roadmap to Nowhere

Steve Perry
Bush's War Web Log
5/06

May 5, 2003

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Phase Two: Syria and

fortified Iraqi cities, made use of their uranium anti-tank weapons there too, not just out in the desert approaches to urban centers.

The notion of Baghdad, a city of five million, being dusted with uranium oxide, is grim, as it will likely produce widespread injuries and death, particularly among children, who are closer to the ground and who routinely play in the dirt.

No wonder the U.S. government is so anxious to keep U.N. environmental experts at bay. The risks of uranium weapons to soldiers and civilians is a topic of some controversy, even among critics, though no one except the Pentagon and NATO disputes that it is a health threat.

Indeed, the Royal Society, whose studies the Pentagon spokesman cited in saying that fears of DU health threats have been debunked since 1991, pointedly disagreed, saying that in the society's view, DU poses both short and long-term risks in Iraq.

A government study prepared for Congress in the mid 1990s offered the following assessment of the dangers of the radioactive weapons: "As much as 70 percent of a DU penetrator can be aerosolized when it strikes a tank. Aerosols containing DU oxides may contaminate the area downwind. DU fragments may also contaminate the soil around the struck vehicle." It adds that there are many paths by which the resulting particles may enter the body - by inhalation, ingestion, or through open wounds. The report then states, "If DU enters the body, it has the potential to generate significant medical consequences. The risks associated with DU in the body are both chemical and radiological."

Once inside the lungs or kidneys, uranium particles tend to stay, causing illnesses such as lung cancer and kidney disease that may take decades to show up. According to Dr. J. W. Gofman, a leading expert and critic of low-level radiation risks, particles of uranium smaller than 5 micron in diameter can become permanently trapped in the lungs. By one estimate, a trapped, single uranium oxide particle of this size could

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Bush's Wars

Sam Smith
Coalition of the Shilling

May 3, 2003

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expose the adjacent lung tissue to approximately 1,360 rem per year--about 8,000 times the annual radiation dosage considered safe by federal regulations for whole body exposure.

Uranium, which besides being carcinogenic is also highly toxic chemically (like lead or mercury), also concentrates in the kidneys and reproductive organs if ingested orally. Even Dan Fahey, of the Persian Gulf War Veterans Resource Center, a Navy veteran who has criticized some anti-war organizations' charges concerning the dangers of uranium weapons, says that they were "probably a contributor to Gulf War Syndrome" among returning U.S. Gulf War veterans. Although he debunks as "propaganda and science fiction," a report by the Uranium Medical Research Center, a U.K.-based organization which claims to have found uranium contamination and signs of radiation-sickness and radiation-induced birth defects in people who live around suspected uranium weapon targets in Kabul and Jalalabad, Afghanistan, Fahey himself is critical of the U.S. military's ever-expanding use of these weapons. In one article he wrote on the subject, he quotes a 1990 Pentagon memo on the health risks of exploded uranium ordinance which concludes that, in order to avoid criticism of the weapons' battlefield use, "we should keep this sensitive issue at mind when after action reports are written."

His conclusion, "The military's view is that unless you can prove something is dangerous, we'll keep using it. My view is that given the known health concerns about depleted uranium weapons, unless you can prove it's safe, don't use it."

There is no question about whether or not the US and British are using uranium weapons in the current war against Iraq. Robert Fisk quoted a U.S. general on the eve of battle as saying, "We have already begun to unwrap our depleted uranium anti-tank shells." (In the 1991 Gulf War, one in seven Iraqi tanks destroyed by the U.S. was hit by a uranium projectile. This time, the percentage of Iraq's 1800 tanks hit by uranium weapons was clearly far higher. As for the more serious use of uranium-tipped missiles and bombs

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Invisible

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His Voice

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American Bulk

Poets' Basement
Reiss, Guthrie, Albert

Steve Perry
Bush's War Web Log
5/03

May 2, 2003

Caoimhe Butterly

in urban settings, the best evidence that they were used is that the Pentagon, absent rules that limit its behavior, uses whatever it has in its arsenal that the generals think works best--and clearly uranium-tipped weapons outperform any alternative in terms of their ability to penetrate armor and other heavy shielding. According to Pentagon studies, uranium projectiles are at least 10 percent more effective at penetrating shielded bunkers and armor than the next-best alternative--tungsten clad weapons. That alone was a powerful incentive to use them.

The Center for Defense Information reports that the patents for America's bunker-busting bombs include both tungsten and uranium-cladded versions, making it clear that these weapons exist in the U.S. military arsenal.

Given the Pentagon's public stance that uranium weapons pose no appreciable health risk, there is no reason to believe that these dangerous weapons of mass destruction were not used. Moreover, given the controversy surrounding DU, it seems likely that if the Pentagon had decided not to use DU weapons inside Iraqi cities, it would have trumpeted that fact. No such disavowal was made.

Civilians in the future "liberated" Iraq will likely be paying the price for years--maybe generations--to come. Meanwhile, after they're through watching their president play soldier on an aircraft carrier, American veterans of the Iraq war might want to consider the fate of those soldiers whom the Pentagon sent to participate in early nuclear weapons tests. Fifty years later, after most of those soldier/guinea pigs have died, many of them from suspicious cancers, the government is finally admitting that they received far larger radiation doses than it ever was willing to acknowledge.

Dave Lindorff is the author of Killing Time: an Investigation into the Death Row Case of Mumia Abu-Jamal. A collection of Lindorff's stories can be found here: <http://www.nwuphilly.org/dave.html>

Yesterday's Features

UNHCR: Vluchteling wordt verjaagd door Irakezen

Iraanse en Palestijnse vluchtelingen in Irak worden sinds de val van Saddam Hussein veelvuldig door Irakezen geïntimideerd en aangevalen. Kennelijk is het de bedoeling hen het land uit te jagen.

Dat meldde de VN-Vluchtelingenorganisatie UNHCR gisteren. In Irak leven zo'n 23.000 Iraniërs en 90.000 Palestijnen. Het geweld richt zich vooral op leden van Iraans-Arabische minderheid, die naar Irak is gevlucht tijdens de oorlog in de jaren '80. De meesten

van hen leven rondom Basra in Zuid-Irak. De vluchtelingen worden bedreigd, beroofd en uit hun huizen verjaagd, zei UNHCR-woordvoerder Rupert Colville.

Hij sprak van een systematische intimidatie tegen de Iraniërs en Palestijnen. Zo zijn al duizend Iraniërs verjaagd, aldus Colville. Ze werden als goed geïntegreerd beschouwd in Irak, zei Colville. Nu worden ze gezien als buitenlanders en als mensen die hebben geprofiteerd van het regime van Saddam, omdat hij ze asiel gaf.

Sagittarius

Van: "Platform Tegen de 'Nieuwe Oorlog'" <vrede@omslag.nl>
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Onderwerp: Amerikaanse leger gebruikte massaal verarmd uranium in
 P E R S B E R I C H T

Van het Platform tegen de 'Nieuwe Oorlog'

Utrecht, 15 mei 2003

- Amerikaanse leger maakte massaal gebruik van verarmd uranium in Irak - 500 ton verarmd uranium afgeworpen
- Giftig en radioactief uraniumstof bedreigt gezondheid van soldaten en burgers in Irak

Net als in 1991 is Irak tijdens de recente oorlog bestookt met grote hoeveelheden munitie gemaakt uit verarmd uranium, en mogelijk ook met speciale bommen - zogenaamde 'bunker busters' - gemaakt met het hetzelfde materiaal.

Nieuwe informatie hierover is naar buiten gebracht door een kolonel van het Amerikaans Commando voor Speciale Operaties (de Special Forces), die anoniem heeft verklaard dat er 500 ton verarmd uranium aan munitie en bunker busters is gebruikt in Irak.

Hij meldde verder dat er in de recente oorlog geen pogingen waren gedaan om het gebruik van deze munitie in de steden te vermijden en dat er bij de luchtaanvallen op Bagdad 100 ton in de speciale 'bunker buster'-bommen is gebruikt.

Volgens een voormalige officier van de Britse Marine, commander Robert Green, die dit nieuws bekendmaakte, was de kolonel verantwoordelijk voor de keuze van het soort munitie dat door de Amerikaanse strijdkrachten werd gebruikt. Delen van het zuiden van Irak, waar al in 1991 veel uraniumhoudende munitie is afgevuurd, zouden voorafgaand aan de geallieerde invasie vorige maand zijn gemarkeerd als gevaarlijk terrein, zodat de binnenvallende troepen ze konden vermijden.

Net als in 1991 waren de grondtroepen onvoldoende uitgerust om zich tegen het uraniumstof te beschermen. Volgens deze bron is het Pentagon al jaren op de hoogte van de gevaren van verarmd uranium voor de gezondheid. Uit oefeningen met uraniumhoudende munitie zou zijn gebleken dat het gebruik van een NBC-uitrusting in oorlogsomstandigheden teveel praktische bezwaren geeft. Om die reden zouden deze risico's door het Amerikaanse leger op het slagveld worden genegeerd.

Onderzoekers van de Amerikaanse rekenkamer van het Congres drongen er destijds op aan om het onderzoek naar de gezondheidseffecten van verarmd uranium onder Golfoorlog-veteranen fors uit te breiden boven de 33 gevallen die toen werden onderzocht. Ondanks herhaald aandringen van Amerikaanse

veteranenorganisaties is dat nooit gebeurd.

Jan Schaake, woordvoerder van het Platform tegen de Nieuwe Oorlog, verklaarde: „dit bericht zou de Nederlandse regering tot enige bezinning moeten brengen over haar voorgenomen plan om 600 mariniers naar Irak te sturen".

Noten voor de pers:

- * Meer informatie over verarmd uranium-munitie bij:
Henk van der Keur, 06-41574946 (na 17:00 uur) en bij
Karel Koster, 06-13223359
- * Actueel vredesnieuws uit binnen- en buitenland is beschikbaar
op de samenwerkende websites:

<http://www.wereldcrisis.nl>
<http://www.vredessite.nl>

- * Alle eerder uitgebrachte persberichten van het Platform tegen
de 'Nieuwe Oorlog' op: <http://www.omslag.nl> (bij 'pers')
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Those Who Don't Count

Remembering the Civilian Victims of the War on Iraq

By MARK ENGLER

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May 15, 2003

Ayesha Iman and Sindi

Since the invasion of Iraq has ended, a tone of vindication and bravado has seeped into the national mood. Television newscasters and the Department of Defense agree: America is delighted. Soldiers are giving high-fives. Those of us who opposed the president and his generals should be ashamed in the face of a brilliantly successful war.

There is one question, above others, that this prevailing self-satisfaction works to silence.

<http://www.counterpunch.org/engler05162003.html>

20-5-03

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David Lindorff

Amidst the atmosphere of recrimination, few will risk asking, "What was the cost?"

On televisions overseas, the Marine blitz and Air Force bombs extracted a human price. While Donald Rumsfeld's talking head became the singular icon of war in the United States, the rest of the world held up photos of Ali Ismaeel Abbas, the 12-year-old boy who lost his parents and eight other relatives, along with both of his arms, in the bombing of Baghdad.

No doubt some have exploited such images for propagandistic purposes. No doubt the pursuit of carnage at times became tasteless sensationalism. But what was the impact for Americans of seeing so few, if any, of those who died?

There are estimates available of the number of civilians killed in the war. A group of 19 volunteers in England, the creators of a Web site called "**IraqBodyCount.net**," estimate that there were a "minimum" of 2,050 deaths. This total reflects the lowest numbers provided in news reports of deadly incidents. A more complete tally would have to add the hundreds, maybe thousands, whose deaths were never reported by any source -- those buried quietly in the rubble, or those who were wounded and later died in one of Iraq's overflowing, and ultimately looted, hospitals.

No country, "coalition" or otherwise, has undertaken this reckoning. "A Swiss government initiative launched in the middle of the war," says John Sloboda of IraqBodyCount, "was abandoned under political pressure."

The dilemma this presents is an old one, and a dangerous one, too: What is the weight of a life? How many before it matters? Few can offer good answers. Those who look only at the bloodiest moments of war discount other lives. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi citizens died as a result of the decade-long sanctions, for which Saddam Hussein bears much culpability, but which the United States had the power to lift all along. Many more would have died if sanctions were prolonged. And

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Bombings

Website of the Day
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May 13, 2003

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Western Standards

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Steve Perry

we have no way to know how many will be killed in future invasions inspired by Iraq's conquest, or in resultant acts of retribution.

Washington, of course, kept careful track of the 166 U.S. and British troops killed in action. It shunned, however, the idea of a civilian body count. Many journalists, particularly on television, took this official position as their marching orders.

Even in the most responsible of our newspapers, one idea became a mantra: "a precise number [of civilians who were killed] is not and probably never will be available," said The New York Times. "The final toll may never be determined," said The Washington Post. Again and again, reporters noted the difficulty of making an exact tally.

It was, on face, a statement of humility, an honest acknowledgement of the chaos inherent in military conflict. Yet, at some point, this tendency -- this refusal to count, or to even try -- grew into something else.

It became a form of political denial.

The rare dispatches that scratched through the surface of the government's stance on civilian deaths revealed a human side of war -- in which young soldiers feared for their lives and relied on quick, difficult decisions -- but also, at the same time, a startling desensitization to human life. In one oft-cited report by The New York Times, a Sergeant Schrupf recalled an incident in which Marines fired on an Iraqi soldier standing among several civilians. One woman was killed. "I'm sorry," the sergeant said, "but the chick was in the way."

Another Times reporter wrote of a situation in which Marines attacked a caravan of vehicles approaching them from the distance, not knowing if these might be filled with enemies or, as it actually turned out, with innocents:

"One by one, civilians were killed. Several hundred yards from the forward Marine positions, a blue minivan was fired on; three people were killed. An

The Saudi Arabia
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Grab Their Gas

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The Hippo and the
Mongoose: a Question of
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Folks' Mistakes

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May 12, 2003

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and Baghdad

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Administration's War on
Liberty

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Jason Leopold

old man, walking with a cane on the side of the road, was shot and killed. It is unclear what he was doing there; perhaps he was confused and scared and just trying to get away from the city. Several other vehicles were fired on.... When the firing stopped, there were nearly a dozen corpses, all but two of which had no apparent military clothing or weapons. "Two journalists who were ahead of me, farther up the road, said that a company commander told his men to hold their fire until the snipers had taken a few shots, to try to disable the vehicles without killing the passengers. 'Let the snipers deal with civilian vehicles,' the commander had said. But as soon as the nearest sniper fired his first warning shots, other Marines apparently opened fire with M-16s or machine guns.... "[A] squad leader, after the shooting stopped, shouted: 'My men showed no mercy. Outstanding.'"

The number of civilians killed in the actual fighting does matter, if only to remind us that invasion is not a video game. It matters, because it shows that however sophisticated its tools, war will always claim its "collateral damage," its innocent bystanders.

A callous indifference toward such lives is not limited to the sergeants and squad leaders on the front lines. It is the position fostered by a government that does not count its victims, even as it lines up more conquests: next Syria, then on to Iran.

It is an attitude that survives outside of wartime, guiding our prejudices against those living in countries whose names we never learned to pronounce, countries that our shock-jocks call "turd world" nations.

In order to break the cycle of war and deprivation, hatred and terrorism, the United States some day must start counting not only the dead from this conflict, but all those whom we perpetually

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5/12

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disregard. And it must start holding itself accountable to them. For as it does, we will learn that this is not a matter of two thousand, or even two hundred thousand.

The majority of this world will rise to be counted.

Mark Engler, a writer based in New York City, can be reached at engler@eudoramail.com. T his article first appeared on TomPaine.com. Research assistance provided by Katie Griffiths.

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Coalition 'tortured Iraqi POWs'

Amnesty International is investigating claims that Iraqi prisoners of war were tortured by US and British troops.

A "substantial proportion" of 20 former Iraqi POWs interviewed by the human rights group said they had been maltreated by coalition forces in central and southern Iraq.

Some were civilians who were held on suspicion of being Iraqi militia, Amnesty said. One Saudi Arabian national claimed he was subjected to electric shocks.

The UK's Ministry of Defence said it had not seen any of the details of the allegations.

"All the prisoners held by the British were held under the terms of the Geneva Convention, and they were frequently visited by members of the International Red Cross," a spokesman said.

The alleged mistreatment included "beatings with fists, with feet, also with weapons," Amnesty researcher Said Boumedouha said.

"In one case we are talking about electric shocks being used against a man and in others people are being beaten for the whole night and are still being kicked and their teeth broken. I think you would call that torture," he said.

The man claiming to have received electric shocks was believed to have been a Saudi man who had entered the country from Syria during the war and was suspected of



Troops are accused of beatings and using electric shocks

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Amnesty International

ing a volunteer for Saddam Hussein.

The findings follow Amnesty's first fact-finding mission in Iraq since 1993.

The human rights group said about 6,900 people were detained in Iraq while they were being assessed for POW status. Of these, about 1-2,000 remain in custody.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3034031.stm

20-5-03

An Amnesty spokeswoman told BBC News Online the investigations into the treatment of PoWs were "at a very early stage".

Amnesty workers would be in Iraq for a number of months investigating a number of areas - including human rights abuses under Saddam Hussein - she added.

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Iraqi PoWs tell Amnesty they were tortured

Oliver Burkeman in Washington
Saturday May 17, 2003
The Guardian

Former Iraqi prisoners of war have accused British and American troops of torturing them in custody, blindfolding them before kicking and beating them with weapons for long periods.

Investigators for the human rights group Amnesty International said statements taken from 20 former detainees even included one claim, made by a Saudi man, that he had been subjected to electric shocks by his US captors.

"In one case we are talking about electric shocks being used against a man ... [and] if you keep beating somebody for the whole night and somebody is bleeding and you are breaking teeth, it is more than beating," Amnesty researcher, Said Boumedouha, told a press conference in London yesterday, after returning from Iraq. "I think that is torture."

Mr Boumedouha spoke of one interviewee who claimed to have been "beaten up for a whole night, who was bleeding but they wouldn't even give him water".

His instinct, he said, was that they were telling the truth. "But to what extent, and the details of it all ... that we are still trying to establish."

He added that they still had many interviews to conduct.

The beatings allegedly took place while the captured men - suspected of being members of the Iraqi militia - were being processed at bases in Basra or Nassiriya before being transferred to a detention facility at the southern port city of Umm Qasr. About half of those involved were civilians, Amnesty estimated.

Lesley Warner, an Amnesty spokeswoman, stressed the preliminary nature of the group's findings, and said it would carry out further interviews before presenting a formal dossier to governments in London or Washington.

But Britain's Ministry of Defence denied the claims.

"Those who were detained by British forces were treated in line with the Geneva conventions and we had regular visits by the International Committee for the Red Cross," its statement read. "If there are allegations then we will have to look at them and see if we can investigate."

The electric-shock allegation "sounds to me unbelievable - we just don't do that", said Navy Lieutenant Dan Hetlage, a Pentagon spokesman. "We act in a humane manner towards the enemy prisoners of war that we hold.

"The ICRC is being allowed to conduct a regular series of inspection visits at the facility in Umm Qasr ... we adhere to the Geneva convention because we would want the enemy to."

On the other hand, he said, soldiers were allowed to defend themselves if prisoners became "unruly".

"They are allowed to bring the person under control, but that's about the only time you really have to get physical," he said. "We had thousands of prisoners, and not a whole lot of complaints. They're better off now than [under the fallen regime], getting medical care probably for the first time in years."

But Lt Hetlage said that if Amnesty could provide evidence or corroborate the stories of the prisoners, "investigations will be conducted".

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Campaigners count bodies to ensure US compensation

Rory McCarthy in Baghdad
Saturday May 17, 2003
The Guardian

When the first American tanks rolled past Hassan Karim Hassan's house he ran with his friends to peer over the fence at the end of the street and watch the army finally advance into Baghdad.

Although unarmed, the three young men were immediately mistaken for enemy soldiers. One, Qasim Ali, was shot dead, another, Ali Jawad, was hit by a bullet in his left arm. Minutes later a man driving a taxi was killed in a burst of gunfire from a tank which turned his car into a fireball.

On that morning, Monday April 7, when they rolled through the Hai al-Amal district of Baghdad after a punishing three-week push across the desert, perhaps the troops were more jittery than normal.

"We didn't imagine they would shoot any civilians," Mr Hassan, 32, said yesterday.

"I know this was a battlefield and maybe I was wrong to go and look at the American tanks. I don't know. But we are civilians. They could see through their sights we had no guns."

Almost certainly the young soldiers who fired that morning will never be held to account for the death of Qasim Ali, the injury to Ali Jawad or the killing of the taxi driver, whose charred body lay untouched in his car for two days because people were too scared to leave their homes.

America's generals stated publicly that as the troops rolled forward there would be no attempt to count the bodies of the dead left behind.

On Sunday April 6, the day before the Hai al-Amal shootings, Brigadier General Vince Brooks, the deputy director of operations at the US central command in Qatar, was asked about casualties inflicted in Baghdad.

"It just is not worth trying to characterise by numbers," he said.

"And, frankly, if we are going to be honourable about our warfare, we are not out there trying to count up bodies. This is not the appropriate way for us to go."

Despite his misgivings, the US government is now legally obliged to account for the thousands of Iraqi civilians killed or injured in the war, and those who had their homes destroyed, and give them financial compensation.

Under the Iraq War Supplemental Appropriations Act, which became law last month, it has set aside \$2.4bn to pay for this "assistance" (the word compensation, with its legal implications, is never publicly used) and other relief and reconstruction measures.

But there are unlikely to be Washington officials in Iraq counting the dead. The only independent and properly researched count is being carried out by a small American human rights group.

It is a painstaking process. Each hospital has a handwritten book which logs the patients who have died in hospital and the corpses brought in.

At al-Kindi hospital in central Baghdad it show that 192 civilians were killed in the war up to April 9, when the statue of Saddam Hussein was toppled in Firdos Square. At al-Yarmuk hospital in western Baghdad the register is less meticulous but shows 99 civilian deaths up to the hospital's closure on April 6.

But the staff at both hospitals admit that the logs do not give a full account: some recorded as civilians may have been militia out of uniform, others may have died at the hands of looters, and some of the dead were buried without being taken to hospital.

"I don't know if we will ever know the total number," the records manager at al-Yarmuk Sebhane Hussain,

admitted.

The most accurate survey is being conducted by the Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict, run by a Californian, Marla Ruzicka.

She has 150 surveyors at work checking each report of a civilian death against several different sources. So far they have confirmed 620 civilian deaths in Baghdad and are studying reports of as many as 1,100 in Nassiriya.

It will be at least another month before the survey is complete, but the tally seems likely to be several thousand.

Ms Ruzicka, 26, ran a similar survey in Afghanistan last year, where her team confirmed 824 civilian deaths, although she believes that as many as 2,000 may have died in the war.

Her lobbying and the support of the Democrat senator Patrick Leahy brought unprecedented changes in the law.

Appropriations acts in the past year have allocated \$3.75m for assistance to Afghan victims, although it has yet to be spent. They prepared the ground for the Iraq act, which was passed after Saddam's regime collapsed.

"I want the US government to have a human response to policy for victims of conflict," Ms Ruzicka said. "People seem to think all soldiers in the US are, like in world war two, fighting a just war, but they don't understand that many of the people who die are innocent."

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19 May 2003

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[Forward >](#)

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[Home page](#)

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[IALANA Facts](#)

• [Organisation](#)

• [Timeline](#)

[Projects](#)

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Brief introduction to the actual IUS IN BELLO concerning Depleted Uranium Weapons

by Joachim Lau

"The King must not poison the spear"

A GREEK PHILOSOPHER around 2500 years ago wrote this rule since in these times it was already a recognised norm of existing customary law according to which the unique legitimate objective of a war, is fighting the military force of the enemy. In 1868 this ancient rule has found its form in the famous declaration of St. Petersburg, the so-called Martens clause that states that "the only legitimated object which states should endeavour to accomplish during war is to weaken the military forces of the enemy."

The same principle was established in article 22 of the Hague Convention (1907). "The right of belligerents to inflict damage on the enemy is not unlimited."

The explosion of the first nuclear bomb and half a century of mutual assured destruction by the nuclear powers, has in a certain sense put international law and its fundamental rules in a deep and continuing crisis because it denies the survival and the future of the humanity it entails.

In 1996 however it was revitalised when, as the result of a project initiated by a coalition of "non governmental organisations," including the *International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms*, the highest international judicial authority, the International Court of Justice in The Hague declared, in answer of the request for an advisory opinion of the General Assembly of the UN, that the use and the threat of nuclear weapons is generally forbidden and represents a violation of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflict.

Now, once again we are faced with the use of radioactive material for military means and the question whether or not this is illegal under international law.

The specific facts are as follows: NATO after years and months of public lies, has admitted the use of Depleted Uranium weapons in Iraq, Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo. On that last occasion NATO used around 10 tons of Depleted Uranium in around 32,000 bullets.

When the DU bombs and bullets explode, they develop a temperature level that rises up to 5000 degrees Celsius which together with the developed energy through pressure causes the pulverization of the Uranium. Consequently the uranium-dust aerosol is spread out in the environment and falls onto the ground or on the plants. With the wind this material can be transported up to distances of 40 km or more. The particles that weigh around 5 my (micron) can be inhaled easily and

therefore enter the biological cycle. The DU has a toxic and radioactive effect on the cells with which it makes contact. One of the most toxic effects for the people exposed to DU is the damage of the kidney(s), which will have deadly consequences in most cases. Part of the ingested or inhaled DU-dust will leave the human body in the normal natural way.

With the passing of time DU particles enclosed in the body cause the emission of radiation alpha, beta and gamma, which can slowly damage the metabolism of a cell or its DNA code and create cancer and other illnesses related to the exposure to certain levels of radioactivity, above all leukaemia.

During the past decades the soldiers of NATO have become acquainted with these effects. Canadian Doctors could still find relevant quantities of DU- isotopes in the urine of Golf-war veterans, 10 years after the exposure.

According to art. 22 of the Hague Convention of 1907, as well as according to art. 35 paragraph 1, additional protocol (Geneva Protocol), parties to the convention cannot choose their methods and means of warfare without limits. These rules are imperative and are not derogative, not even before the military occurrence. Each State has the obligation to examine the compatibility of its new arms with the legal norms in question. Therefore the bullets have to meet the conditions of article 23 par. 1 Hague Convention 1907 and [art] 35 [com]. 2 of the Geneva Protocol I. DU- weapons increase the amount of suffering and the severity of the wounds inflicted on the enemy in a disproportionate and unnecessary way. Moreover, the diffused DU in the environment in time also damages the belligerents and non-belligerents in an indiscriminate way and therefore represents a violation of the [art] 51 [com] 4 c and 5 b of the Geneva Protocol I.

Art. 35 com.3 and [art]. 55 Geneva Protocol I contains specific prohibitions concerning damage to the environment and the DU-bombs are also illegitimate under these rules.

One of the principal rules of international law (*ius cogens*), contained also in art 23 §a of the Hague Convention of 1907, is the prohibition of the use of toxic weapons. This prohibition also applies to damage done with toxic weapons to a states own soldiers or neutral states. Once the DU-bombs explode, their radioactivity can not be limited to for instance the territories of Kosovo or Serbia; the wind will also bring radioactive particles elsewhere and therefore the use of these weapons violates the principle of neutrality too.

The International Court of Justice has underlined in its advisory opinion of 1996 that all new weapons have to be compatible, at all times, with the generally recognised law applicable in armed conflict which comprises:

- the Martins clause
- article 22 and 23 of the Convention of The Hague of 1907
- the statute of the military court of Nuremberg
- the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 on the protection of victims of war and of civilians (specifically art. 55 (environment))
- Genocide Convention

The DU weapons evidently don't compare to nuclear weapons to the extent that the latter generate an uncontrolled chain reaction. However, the radiation effects on health and environment are similar, although in a smaller quantity.

At this point it is worth mentioning, that according to the convention of Moscow of 5 August 1963 the prohibition of nuclear experiments in the atmosphere is not limited to bombs that generate a chain reaction (therefore the sub critical nuclear tests at the NEVADA Test site will all be conducted underground), which makes it possible to consider this convention applicable to DU-Weapons, because the principal purpose of the convention was the realisation of the desire of the parties involved, to put a definite end to the radioactive pollution of the environment.

Another issue that demands attention is one in light of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and Chemical Weapons Convention. The non-nuclear weapon states, which produce electric energy with uranium have no right to use, to transfer or to sell waste material for war-related activities. In part the purpose of these treaties is a rigid limitation of the use of nuclear isotopes other than pacific.

Therefore we have to examine the question, if a specific prohibition of the use of Depleted Uranium for purposes of war exists: Given that the most visible effect of depleted uranium when it is burnt in the environment, is its toxic effect, art. 23 § a of the Hague Convention of 1907 would have to be applicable.

In its decision of 8 July 1996 the International Court has examined the question if nuclear weapons revert under this prohibition and the court has denied it in so far as that state praxis does not show them to be considered as toxic weapons.

Independent of this, it needs to be underlined that as early as the year 1954 the NATO-states have implicitly recognised the toxic nature of nuclear arms in the additional protocol of the North-Atlantic Treaty, in so far as Germany at that time declared its renouncement "of designing, getting or using nuclear material or radioactive isotopes which through an explosion or in an other way of uncontrolled transformation are able to cause destruction of masses, lesions or **poisoning of masses**," with respect to nuclear weapons.

The fact that DU-Weapons don't cause the typical chain reaction of a nuclear weapon, which creates an enormous amount of destructive energy and subsequent radiation, does not close the door for the possibility to consider these weapons to be comprised under the prohibition of toxic weapons, and in case of a violation to consider its use as a war-crime.

NATO rejects the accusations with the simple affirmation that proof for the causality between the illness (both of the civic population and of the soldiers) and the use of depleted uranium doesn't exist. In my opinion this affirmation is not reasonable. Nor in a factual sense, nor in a juridical sense.

In an open letter to the American government the Prof. Emeritus for Molecular Biology and Cell-Biology, John W. Gofmann of the Berkley University stated in 1999: "By any reasonable standard of biomedical proof, there is no safe dose, which means that just one decaying radioactive atom can cause permanent mutation in to cell's genetic molecules" - see also Gofmann 1990 "Radiation Cancer induced from Low Dose Exposure"-

The effect of genetic mutation by radiation was discovered in 1927 by Prof. Josef Hermann Müller. A reasonable and correct application of this actual state of science, is seen in the regulation and legislation of the European Community regarding the protection of the civilian population and the personnel in the nuclear sector, which led to the relative security norms.

Article 8 and 9 of the directive 96/ 29/ Euratom of 1 May 1996 establishes the explicit prohibition for people under the age of 18 to be exposed to **any kind of radiation** in a work area where uranium and its by-products including depleted uranium (waste material) are processed.

Furthermore the directive establishes that people above 18 can be exposed to a maximum of 100 millisievert (mSv) radiation in a period of five years with an effective dose of not more than 50 mSv in a single year. It seems to me that the data that was collected by several organisations, which have done research in Kosovo and in Iraq, shows figures that hugely exceed these limits. In any case, the exposure to low radiation is considered a health risk by the directive for any operator subject to this kind of exposure and therefore these people must be checked periodically.

The danger that derives from this type of arms (DU) and from the low radiation effects of nuclear weapons was recently reconfirmed legally in a judgement of the Japanese Supreme Court of 18 July 2000, in the case Hideko Matsuya v. The Minister of Public Health. In a peace treaty, the Japanese State has, to a certain extent, assumed civil responsibility for the damages caused by the bombs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Mrs. Matsuya was exposed to a level of radiation that is considered low while she was in a position several kilometres away from the epicentre of the explosion of the bomb that hit Nagasaki. Her health problems and specifically her psychological problems had not been recognised by the Japanese State as an effect of the nuclear bomb.

A lower court and a court of appeal had recognised the causality of the damage and the relative obligation of Japan to provide psychological and social assistance.

The Supreme Court has confirmed the judgement of these courts. However, it did so in a motivation that differs substantially from the ones given by the lower courts and which in my opinion is very interesting for the judicial evaluation of DU-Weapons.

In substance, the Court refused to consider a specific direct causality regarding the low radiation caused by the Nagasaki bomb and the suffering of the victim, but it did establish, that the principal danger and the damaging effect of radiation as a consequence of the use of nuclear material in war with respect to the health of human beings, is scientifically recognised and incontestable and that therefore the burden of proof rests with the State of Japan, which means that the State of Japan had to prove that the illness of the plaintiff had been caused by other factors.

Perhaps the Generals of NATO think that they can escape penal responsibility even if NATO has civil responsibility regarding the victims of DU-Weapons.

However, I think that in the future an Italian District Attorney or his colleague in an other NATO-country, will be able to show the penal responsibility in the sense of article 85 of the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1994, First Protocol, because as early as 1993 the Pentagon issued an internal memorandum on DU-Weapons and how to use them safely, in which was written: "When soldiers inhale or ingest DU-dust, they incur a potentially increased risk of cancer...".

Considering all these norms and specifically article 6 b of the Statute of the Military Court of Nuremberg, article 3 b of the Statute of the Yugoslavia Tribunal, article 85 paragraph 3 b Protocol I of the Geneva

Convention and last but not least article 8 nr.2 b of the Statute of the International Court (Rome), we have to state that the responsible commanders of NATO and the NATO-soldiers that operated in the Kosovo-war, have committed multiple crimes of war, for which they can be prosecuted.

Florence, 26 February 2001, DU-Conference

Southern Office	southernoffice@ialana.org
Northern Office	northernoffice@ialana.org
United Nations Office	unitednationsoffice@ialana.org

website by wildrooster

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Iraqi civilian prisoners of war claim they have been tortured by British and US troops.

A researcher for Amnesty International said he had interviewed at least 20 former prisoners of war who claimed they were beaten while in custody.

Researcher Said Boumedouha said at least one man said he had received electro-shock torture.

He acknowledged that Amnesty International had not presented any of the claims to British or US forces for any response.

He said: "We still have people on the ground in Iraq and we will continue to gain testimonies. Once that is complete we hope to provide a full dossier to present to the British and American authorities as well as publishing ourselves."

Mr Boumedouha estimated up to half of the 20 people he interviewed were civilians and the rest military.

He said: "In one case we are talking about electric shocks being used against a man and in others people are being beaten for the whole night and are still being kicked and their teeth broken, I think you would call that torture."

The researcher said all the people he interviewed were free at the time he met them and most had been detained in and around Basra.

Story filed: 12:36 Friday 16th May 2003

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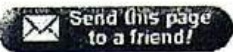
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Article of the Week

**'A Chill Wind is Blowing
In This Nation...'**
by Tim Robbins

Tuesday, May 20, 2003

Headlines



Published on Sunday, May 18, 2003 by the Los Angeles Times

Baghdad's Death Toll Assessed

A Times hospital survey finds that at least 1,700 civilians were killed and more than 8,000 injured in Iraq's capital during the war and aftermath.
by Laura King

BAGHDAD — At least 1,700 Iraqi civilians died and more than 8,000 were injured in Baghdad during the war and in the weeks afterward, according to a Los Angeles Times survey of records from 27 hospitals in the capital and its outlying districts.

In addition, undocumented civilian deaths in Baghdad number at least in the hundreds and could reach 1,000, according to Islamic burial societies and humanitarian groups that are trying to trace those missing in the conflict.

More than a month after the war's end, no official tally of civilian casualties has emerged. Amid the disorder attending the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime and the nascent American military occupation, one might never be made — although such a reckoning could play an important role, in the eyes of a watching world, in weighing the conflict's moral costs.

The Times' count of civilian casualties spanned the five weeks beginning March 20, a period that includes the U.S. bombardment and subsequent ground battle for the Iraqi capital. It also includes fatalities from unexploded ordnance during the first 2 1/2 weeks after the city fell on April 9 and deaths as a result of injuries suffered earlier during the fighting. The survey covered all the large hospitals and most smaller specialty facilities in the city center, as well as those in remote districts within the municipal boundaries.

Those victims included in the toll died as a direct result of the conflict, but not necessarily at American hands. Medical officials said many civilians — even a rough estimate of the numbers is impossible — were killed by exploding Iraqi ammunition stored in residential neighborhoods, by falling Iraqi antiaircraft rounds that had been aimed at American warplanes, or by Iraqi fire directed at American troops.

U.S. military officials said repeatedly throughout the war that all possible care was being taken to avoid civilian casualties, and expressed regret over those that occurred. The American administration in Iraq, which is struggling to restore basic services and control street violence, has no plans to try to tally the civilian dead.

"We have no way of verifying independently whether people who were killed were civilians or not civilians," Pentagon spokesman Lt. Col. Dave Lapan said Friday.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to obtaining an accurate count of civilian deaths is distinguishing between Iraqi soldiers and civilians. In the waning days of the war, many Iraqi fighters continued to man their positions, but they dressed in civilian clothes and discarded their dog tags, according to accounts from witnesses in the city at the time.

But even soldiers who shed their uniforms and threw away their weapons often continued to carry some form of identification. The hospital figures did not consistently separate out men between the ages of 18 and 35, one common approach to limiting the inclusion of soldiers among the tally of civilians. But most said if they found any indication of military affiliation, they noted it in their patient records.

"Some of them would murmur to us they were soldiers, because they wanted us to be able to help find their families if they died," said Dr. Mahmoud Kubisi, a general surgeon at the 450-bed Karamah Teaching Hospital in the city center. More than a month after the war's end, Baghdad bears ubiquitous reminders of its dead. Hand-lettered death notices — black banners printed in yellow and white — flutter from trees, walls and lampposts, growing more faded each day. "In the name of God the merciful, and in accordance with God's will " most begin, going on to list the victim's name and briefly describe how he or she died.

For each of the conflict's dead, grief has spread widening ripples through the capital, where about one-fifth of Iraq's 24 million people live.

"Our home is an empty place," said 72-year-old Saler Hamzeh Ali Moussawi, 72, the patriarch of a family from the south of Baghdad that lost 11 of its members, ranging in age from 16 to 50, in a single catastrophic blow April 7 when their minivan was apparently hit by a U.S. tank shell. Family members recovered the badly decomposed bodies four days later.

"We who are left are like wild animals — all we can do is cry out and cry out," said Moussawi, his lined face contorted with sorrow.

Most of Baghdad's hospitals managed to stay open throughout the fighting and its aftermath, although looting forced about half a dozen to temporarily close. As the dead and wounded poured in, conditions became more and more chaotic.

"The whole hospital was the emergency room," Dr. Bashir Mohammed Bashir, director of emergency medicine at Kindi General Hospital. "The nature of injuries was so severe — one body without a head, someone else with their abdomen ripped open. Human beings are so frail in the face of these weapons of war."

Baghdad's many smaller specialty hospitals — for eye surgery, neurology, obstetrics and plastic surgery — were pressed into wartime service as emergency clinics. Dr. Mahmoud Jasim Ali, an obstetrician at Habibi Hospital, recounted delivering a baby by caesarean section, and barely waiting to hear her first cry before rushing to attend to a screaming man whose arm had been blown off.

In some cases, records at Baghdad hospitals were incomplete. In others, details were withheld by Iraqi authorities, or by what passes for authority in the power vacuum left by the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime.

In the poor district formerly called Saddam City but now known as Sadr City, permission from a powerful Shiite Muslim sheik was required for a journalist to visit the neighborhood's four hospitals. At one of them, statisticians reported that the sheik's aides had already confiscated the records.

At Mansour Hospital, in the sprawling four-hospital complex known as Medical City in central Baghdad, doctors claimed that U.S. troops had removed their casualty records. American soldiers in the area confirmed that they had confiscated some weapons but denied seizing hospital documents.

The statistical departments of several Baghdad hospitals were left in disarray by looters who swept through the city after its fall. However, hospital staff members managed to reassemble data based on hurried notes made by emergency doctors and nurses, patient charts and tallies kept by morgue attendants.

In as many cases as possible, The Times examined original handwritten records — stacks of death certificates and long lists of carefully inked names and personal details in the oversized ledgers that serve as each hospital's book of the dead.

While very few Baghdad hospitals had computerized files, meticulous record-keeping was the norm in Hussein's Iraq, which for decades sustained an overblown bureaucracy. Iraqi death certificates, to be filled out in quadruplicate, require detailed personal information about the deceased and the manner of death.

But even an ingrained national habit of careful documentation couldn't stand up entirely to war's chaos. Some hospitals ran out of death certificates. Exhausted doctors, lurching from one maimed patient to the next, sometimes had time for little more than a quick notation.

"We were working day and night," said Dr. Abbas Timimi, director of Abu Ghraib General Hospital on the city's western outskirts. "With so many people so badly hurt, we felt so much pressure to be treating patients instead of filling out forms. But we'd always scribble something."

Doctors and nurses knew that for survivors seeking dead relatives, any scrap of information would help. At one hospital after another, officials showed bags of neatly labeled personal effects of the dead: family photographs, prayer beads, bloodstained identity cards, crumpled banknotes.

"Unclaimed No. 21," read a simple handwritten note in the death records at General Hospital in Sadr City. "She is a woman, middle-aged. She is a little bit fat. She is wearing a green housedress, and she is missing some teeth." On the basis of that brief description, the body of Sadiha Journey, 42, was later identified by her family and taken away for burial.

Not included in The Times' count were dozens of deaths that doctors indirectly attributed to the conflict. Those cases included pregnant women who died of complications while giving birth at home because they could not get to a hospital and chronically ill people, such as cardiac or dialysis patients, who were unable to obtain needed care while the fighting raged.

"Even once the fighting stopped, our most sophisticated operating theaters, in which we could perform open-heart surgery, had been destroyed by the looters," said Waseem Khalid, a prominent cardiac surgeon at Ibn Bidar Hospital for Heart Disease. "I knew I was sending some of my patients home to die."

In the weeks after the conflict, the dead — or at least their remains — tended not to rest in peace. It was not uncommon for a body to be moved three or four times, first from a shallow grave near where the person fell to temporary sanctuary in a mosque garden or the nearest neighborhood cemetery, and finally to a burial place of the family's choosing. Most Shiite families, even if they live in Baghdad, bury their dead at family plots in the holy cities of Najaf or Karbala.

Obtaining a death certificate is crucial for establishing property ownership and inheritance rights. So grieving families are braving the difficult bureaucratic process of obtaining the paperwork for what in many cases are all but unidentifiable sets of remains.

Based on the eventual gathering of those certificates, the city's registry of births and deaths says that it hopes to produce a toll of war dead, but that it will probably take months.

Even at Baghdad's largest hospitals, such as 992-bed Yarmouk Hospital, morgues were built to hold only a few dozen bodies. During the war, several hospitals resorted to burying bodies on their grounds. At Thawra hospital, officials commandeered a refrigerated truck used to deliver frozen chicken and stored

bodies in it.

Particularly in areas not served by a neighborhood hospital, mosques stepped in to bury corpses that were rotting in cars and buildings. Volunteers, some of them as young as 15 or 16, joined in the effort, despite the extreme danger of moving about outdoors in the initial days of the American military presence.

"They were very brave, these boys — braver than men," said Hashim Qureishi, 34, an engineer who led a group of volunteers. "It was terrible work, though, very terrible."

The mosques kept records and personal effects that would help relatives identify the bodies later, the volunteers said.

"If they didn't have an ID on them, we would take their photograph, or use a video camera," said volunteer Haidar Mayahi. "If the condition of the body allowed, we would wash it before praying and burying it. But with most of them, that wasn't possible."

Four mosque-based burial societies in widely scattered districts of the city, which represent only a sampling of such informal groups at work, reported they had buried a total of about 600 bodies they believed to have been those of civilians, and many more of soldiers.

Haidar Tari, director of tracing missing persons for the Iraqi Red Crescent, estimated there could have been up to 3,000 such undocumented burials, perhaps one-third of them involving civilians. The Red Crescent has half a dozen teams working in districts where large numbers of dead were buried, but has not yet gained access to some areas under U.S. military control, including a large swath of land near the airport.

Hardest to trace will be people who died while traveling, Tari said. Their relatives might not have known when they left home, or where they were headed, and thus have no idea where to look.

"On one stretch of highway alone, there were more than 50 civilian cars, each with four or five people incinerated inside, that sat in the sun for 10 or 15 days before they were buried nearby by volunteers," Tari said. "That is what there will be for their relatives to come and find. War is bad, but its remnants are worse."

During and after the war, there was heated debate over the circumstances of some civilian deaths. A blast at the Nasser Market in Baghdad's Shula district on March 28 caused at least 50 fatalities, hospital officials said. Witnesses blamed American bombardment, but U.S. authorities have suggested the explosion could have been caused by Iraqi fire or stored ammunition instead.

During the first week of April, the trail of civilian deaths followed the trajectory of the ground battle for the city. The toll was particularly great in Baghdad's southern outskirts, the entry point for most of the American troops and the site of many important Iraqi military installations.

Because of the danger of travel and the breakdown of communications, many of those deaths went unreported at the time. And with the collapse of central authority, hospital officials say no Iraqi agency now appears to be in a position to compile a toll based on their reports.

"No one has asked us for our figures — not the Health Ministry, not the bureau of registry, not the Americans, no one," said Dr. Daoud Jasim, an orthopedic surgeon at Mahmoudiya Hospital, about 20 miles south of the city center, that reported more than 200 civilian deaths. "And it was a battlefield here, with the civilians caught in the middle."

Determining the civilian toll is difficult in any conflict.

William M. Arkin, senior fellow at the Center for Strategic Education at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, and a consultant and contributor to The Times, said that it probably will not be known until summer or later how many civilians died in Iraq but that the number will probably be "many thousands."

Arkin, who was a military consultant to Human Rights Watch in its 2000 assessment of civilian deaths in Yugoslavia and also estimated civilian casualties in the 2001 conflict in Afghanistan, said it was not possible to assess the effectiveness of the use of precision-guided weapons to minimize civilian casualties without knowing how many civilians died as a result of an air attack or ground conflict. But, he said, his "gut feeling" was that the air-delivered precision-guided weapons "did very well."

"If the worst single incident of civilian collateral damage in this war from airstrikes is the market bombing [in Baghdad], where 50 or so civilians died, you can get a sense of the advancement that has occurred as a result of a greater percentage of precision-guided weapons being used by air forces," he said.

Some 3,500 Iraqi civilians died in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, including about 700 in the Baghdad area, he said. Almost all were killed by air attacks.

It is difficult to compare the number of civilian casualties in the Iraq war to previous U.S. conflicts, Arkin said, because the wars were fought differently. In Yugoslavia, he said, there were an estimated 500 civilian casualties, but it was largely an air war. In Afghanistan, he said, estimates of civilian casualties ranged from 1,200 to 3,000.

Several human rights and humanitarian groups are attempting to come up with civilian casualty tallies both for Baghdad and the country as a whole.

The New York-based Human Rights Watch, which has been compiling statistics elsewhere in the country, began its investigations in Baghdad last week. A fledgling Washington-based group called the Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict, or CIVIC, has documented nearly 600 deaths in the capital thus far, but says its emphasis is on locating and assisting survivors rather than compiling a complete tally.

Attempts by Iraq's Ministry of Health to compile records halted just prior to what several hospitals said was the phase of heaviest casualties, from April 7-9. As of April 6, the ministry said it had recorded 292 civilian deaths in the city's four central districts, but did not provide a hospital-by-hospital breakdown.

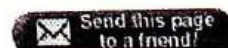
Several doctors said they believed that during the war, Iraqi authorities provided civilian casualty counts to the international media that were inflated with dead and injured soldiers. Military deaths were a closely held secret, however, and their extent might never be known.

"We were divided, with a special sector for the military and a general in charge of it, a doctor," said Sabhan Mohammedawi, the director of statistics at Yarmouk Hospital. "No one dared to ask them about their numbers. And then they were gone."

Times staff writer Richard Simon in Washington contributed to this report.

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Collateral Damage

De humanitaire gevolgen van een oorlog tegen Irak

24-5-2003

Zaterdag 24 mei, 13.30-16.30 uur.

Universitair Medisch Centrum,
Heidelberglaan 100.

Organiseerd door: NVMP,

Artsen voor Vrede (AVV),

Vereniging voor Economie en
Vrede (VEV).

Collateral Damage

De Amerikaanse drang tot een militair ingrijpen tegen Irak is werkelijkheid geworden. Maar bij deze oorlog spelen niet alleen zaken als het opsporen van massavernietigingswapens, het afzetten van Saddam Hoessein of het veilig stellen van grote olievoorraden voor het Westen een rol. Een oorlog tegen Irak betekent ook een enorme humanitaire ramp voor de Iraakse bevolking. Dit element

komt angstvallig weinig aan bod in de gevoerde discussies.

De Iraakse bevolking lijdt al vanaf 1991 onder sancties die het land teruggebracht hebben naar het welvaartsniveau van een ontwikkelingsland.

Er is sprake van een verzwakte bevolking die al jaren geleden onder de VN sancties heeft geleden. Het VN embargo op wapens heeft de verzwakte bevolking niet geholpen. De chemicapitalisme heeft de bevolking verder onderdrukt. De bondgenoten met alle middelen gevoerd worden. Infrastructuur (wegen, havens, elektriciteitsnetwerk) en gezondheidszorg zullen zware schade oplopen. De van voedselhulp afhankelijke bevolking zal hierdoor zwaar getroffen wor-

den, velen, vooral zwakkere groepen als ouderen en kinderen, zullen sterven en grote vluchtingenstromen komen op gang.

Inmiddels zijn er diverse rapporten gepubliceerd waarin de noodklok geluid wordt en schrikbarende rampscenarios worden geschilderd. Dit boek wordt verder aan dat de rampscenarios op het gebied van de humanitaire rampen aan de hand van de ontbrekende informatie van de meeste slachtoffers vallen.

Informatie

NVMP-bureau, Hans van Iersson,
Telefoon: 030-2722940,
e-mail: office@nvmp.org

wordt het adres (ook dat op internet) en de doelstelling vermeld. Als inleiding voor de laatste groepering wordt er verwezen naar Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi en Rosa Parks in de traditie van *non violence*. Burgerlijke ongehoorzaamheid wordt hierbij verbonden aan vernietiging van de oorlogsmachinerie. Leden van vele religieuze overtuigingen zijn hiertoe tot elkaar gekomen. Hierbij noemt ze zowel Christenen, Moslims, Boeddhisten en Joden als ook de leden van de Ploegscharenbeweging***, waarvan de leden bereid zijn volgens Jesaja 2:4 uit de Bijbel lanceercomputers kapot te slaan en daar gevangenisstraf voor over hebben.

Ook rekent de schrijfster dr. Rosalie Bertell, een RK religieuze, wetenschapster en algemeen erkend expert betreffende het vraagstuk van lage stralingsdoses tot de groep van bur-

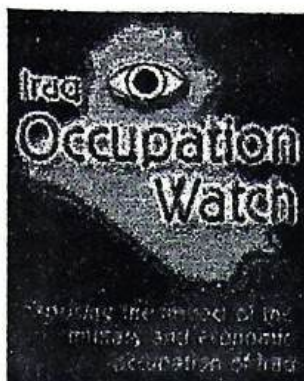
geractivisten. Deze heeft de gevolgen van het gebruik van radioactief materiaal onderzocht en aangetoond dat in de laatste 55 jaar 1,5 miljard mensen door nucleaire oorzaken zijn gedood, ziek gemaakt of verminkt terwijl de operaties met nucleaire wapens de atmosfeer bevuild hebben wat een bedreiging voor alle leven op aarde vormt.

Het boek begint met citaten uit de aanbevelingen van bekende persoonlijkheden. Het eerste citaat, dat van Naomi Klein, pionier van de andere-globaliserings beweging, luidt: Dr Caldicott heeft de zeldzame eigenschap wetenschap te combineren met passie, logica met liefde, dringende noodzaak met humor. Bij het dagen van een nieuwe oorlog zonder einde, is het opnieuw tijd om te luisteren nu zij voor onze wereld de alarmklok luidt. Het is vurig te hopen dat deze alarmklok gehoord wordt! ☸

* *FAEs zijn 15 pound fuel air explosives, die de uitwerking als van een atombom hebben en bestaan uit een brandstofcontainer en twee afzonderlijke soorten explosieve ladingen, wat tot gevolg heeft dat er een massieve storm ontstaat, die mensen doodt en niet versterkte gebouwen neerhaalt.*

** *Door vuurstormen die oliebronnen, chemische fabrieken, steden en bossen zullen aantasten wordt de aarde bedekt met een dikke laag van zwarte, radioactieve smog, waardoor maar 17% zonlicht kan door dringen. Het zal minstens een jaar duren tot de toestand wat temperatuur en zonlicht betreft weer normaal zal zijn. De kans is daarbij groot dat doordat in de stratosfeer de ozonlaag verloren is gegaan het zonlicht een veel grotere intensiteit zal hebben dan voorheen. In een document uit 1985, gepubliceerd door het Witte Huis wordt aangegeven dat bijna elk menselijk leven in die omstandigheden verdwijnt omdat de landbouw en de maatschappelijke organisaties verloren zijn gegaan wat zowel bij de vijand als bij het land zelf het geval zal zijn.*

*** *In Nederland bestaat de 'Van Zwaarden tot loegscharen' groep, thans gefuseerd met 't Kan Anders.*



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[Letter from Baghdad](#)
[West must allow us the
chance to manage our
own country](#)
[Now do you get it?](#)
[Baghdad on the
Blackout: A Path to
Enlightenment?](#)
[Carlson: Iraqi misses
security of Saddam's
regime](#)
[More »](#)
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[E-Mail This Page](#)
[Printer Safe](#)
[Version](#)
[Site Map](#)
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A letter from Baghdad

by **Ahmed Kharrufa, International Occupation Watch Center**
August 28th, 2003

Hello friends,

Each day I write you a letter in my mind but I simply lost the will to put those letters into the computer. This time I fortunately did.

I just wanted to update you with what is hapenning here.

In my last letter, about a month ago, I told you that we used to have electricity for about 8-12 hours a day. We were promised (you know by whome) that electricity will get MUCH better after the 25th of July. Now its the 24th of August and we still have electricity for no more than 8-12 hours a day. The funny thing is that today in a press conference Mr. Brimer sayed that electricity DID GET MUCH BETTER. !!!!! Well not in my country, perhaps he was referring to NY because it did get better there

As for fuel. Well the fuel queue shrinked from about a kilometer to about a 100 meters, plus minus 200 meters depending on I don't know what. Because one day you see tens of cars in queues the other day you see five or six. How come one day nobody has fuel and the other day everybody has, is out of my knowledge!!!

Security:

Going out with a new car (specially Peugeot or BMW) is still a greate risk. There is a probability that you'll get shot (not necessarily murdered - thank God) and have your car taken. Unfortunately mine is a Peugeot, so my car has not left the garage for the past 4 months. Many many people still go out in new cars, but personaly I am not willing to take that risk. To be honest, we used to hear about a car being stolen every day but now we hear that about once or twice a week. Now thats an improvement! This is the number I hear about and not the actual number of cars being stolen in all Baghdad.

I tried to get an old car but since there is no government, you cannot trust anyone to sell you a car. It might turn out to be stolen. So getting a car is not as simple as it may seem.

There are tens of thousands of used cars being imported (I am

[Civilian Casualti](#)
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[What Iraqis are](#)
[General News](#)
[What U.S. Soldi
Saying](#)
[Cultural Heritag](#)
[Occupation Wat
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Reports](#)
[Cost of the War
Occupation](#)
[Background](#)

not exaggerating the number) from everywhere. But no one knows what will be the rules for their registration and whether one will have to pay any taxes or registration fees. They are all in the street and without plate numbers!!!

Many roads are still blocked by the US army. In fact the roads being blocked are increasing. The hanging bridge is still closed. This in addition to the increased number of cars (because of those being imported - and not taking my car out is not making the traffic any better) is making a lot of traffic jams. We go out to work in the morning and we reach the office either in 20 minutes or in an hour.

We thought that those blockings were temporary. Specially the hanging bridge and some main highways leading to it. But it has been four months now and all what they did is blocked the "Abu Noas street - a very vital street" also. So it looks like they are not going to be opened soon.

Water is almost always there, but it is very weak. No complains on this, though.

In my last message I also said that MCI announced that it will make its mobile service public in mid-july (at least I saw a formal paper from them saying so) but this turned out to be just another broken promise.

Many areas are still without any kind of telephone service because the phone exchangers in their places was hit.

So in short, no noticeable improvement were seen in the past two months. This is only making people more desperate and those who were optimistic have now lost their optimism. I am one of those people.

When in a very short period you hear that a vital oil pipe was destroyed over and over again, and the Jordanian embassy (which is less than 2 Km from our house) gets attacked by a very large amount of explosives, same day an attack about 1 Km from where I work; and then what happened in the UN HQ, (you fill in the gaps with small explosions here and there). With all that, imagine the way we feel.

For the first time in my life, I started to think if I should consider leaving my country. I am simply losing hope.

Each day we hear some bad news of all kinds. ranging from people being robbed, to killed, to explosions, ... etc. You start your day with something to destroy the rest of the day for you. Consider that for a life.

From the experience we had in the past few months. Almost all the promises we were given, were broken. Even when they said they'll make passports in mid october (though not important) it also turned out to be another broken promise.

A week ago I went to get my fathers retirement payment. it was 60\$ and they give the payment for all the retired people in Baghdad in one month and in one place and my dads turn was at 12Aug. It was 52 degrees that day. (A fact: More than

3000 people died in France because the temprature reached 42).

All the people there are over 60, and they have to stand in queues outdoors. Is this how the Americans look at human rights. During the period I was in the queue two persons fainted. Was it difficult to do it like they old days. Each from the bank closest to his residence?

Bye the way, the 60\$ were for three months!!

A friend of mine asked me if we get to see the American soldiers often. Well you can hardly go out for more than 15 minutes without seeing a patrol or two. Helicopters are almost always there. Yesterday when I was sleeping at the roof (where most Iraqis sleep nowadays because of the absence of electricity) A helicopter came so low that I were almost able to reach out and touch it. Picture this, you sleeping safe and sound, and suddenly you wake up on the sound of a helicopter no more than 10 meters above of you. If you don't believe it was that close, well here is the proof: I saw it in the dark WITHOUT WEARING MY GLASSES. Do you believe me now?

We are closer to nature than any time before. We spend a lot time in the garden and we sleep at the roof in the night just counting the bright start in the very dark surroundings.

I know I might sound too pesimistic in this letter but this is only because I feel that way. Things might be better than how I see them or will be soon, but unfortunately I see things this way.

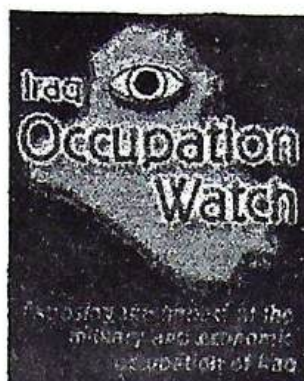
Regards,

Ahmed Kharrufa

Baghdad

Iraq

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US admits cameraman was shot dead at close range

**by Justin Huggle, The Independent
August 19th, 2003**

The American army admitted yesterday that its soldiers killed an award-winning Reuters cameraman. Mazen Dana, a Palestinian, was shot dead by a US tank crew at close range while trying to film outside Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison on Sunday, after a mortar attack on the prison.

The Americans claimed that the soldiers mistook the camera Mr Dana was holding for a rocket-propelled grenade launcher - a claim that was immediately rejected by journalists who witnessed the killing.

"We were all there, for at least half an hour. They knew we were journalists," said Stephan Breitner of France 2 television. "After they shot Mazen, they aimed their guns at us. I don't think it was an accident. They are very tense. They are crazy. They are young soldiers and they don't understand what is happening."

Mr Dana's driver, Munzer Abbas, said: "There were many journalists around. They knew we were journalists. This was not an accident."

Mr Dana's colleagues said the tank was 30 metres from him when it opened fire. Television cameras do not look like RPG launchers: at such close range it should have been impossible to confuse the two.

A senior US Army spokesman offered condolences to Mr Dana's family, but said soldiers would not fire warning shots when they believed they were under threat. Lt-Col Guy Shields said: "I can't give you details on the rules of engagement, but the enemy is not in formations, they are not wearing uniforms. During wartime, firing a warning shot is not a necessity. There is no time for a warning shot if there is potential for an ambush."

The Reuters team had identified themselves to American soldiers guarding the perimeter of the prison, and they had been given permission to film. Nael al-Shyouki, a Reuters soundman working with Mr Dana, said: "After we filmed, we went into the car and prepared to go when a convoy led by a tank arrived and Mazen stepped out of the car to film. I

followed him and Mazen walked three to four metres. We were noted and seen clearly." He said the American soldiers "saw us and they knew about our identities and mission".

Mr Shyouki described the killing: "A soldier on the tank shot at us. I lay on the ground. I heard Mazen and I saw him scream and touching his chest. I cried at the soldier, telling him, 'you killed a journalist'. They shouted at me and asked me to step back and I said, 'I will step back but please help, please help and stop the bleed'."

The soldiers did try to help but could do nothing. "Mazen took a last breath and died before my eyes," said Mr Shyouki. The 43-year-old cameraman leaves a wife and four children. "He was supposed to be going home today," a Reuters colleague said yesterday.

Mr Dana is the second Reuters cameraman to be killed by US forces in Baghdad. Taras Protsyuk, a Ukrainian, died when a tank fired a shell into the Hotel Palestine, which was full of journalists, as Baghdad was falling. In both cases, witnesses accused the US of knowingly killing a journalist.

Mr Dana was no novice in war zones. His hometown, Hebron in the West Bank, is a dangerous place. In 2001, he won the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) International Press Freedom Award for his work in Hebron. He was shot three times in 2000.

Reuters, the CPJ and Reporters Sans Frontières in Paris called on the American military to conduct a full inquiry into Mr Dana's death.

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The Right Honourable Jack Straw MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Downing Street West
London
SW1A 2AL

Fax: 0207 8392417

22 January 2003

Your ref:

Our ref: PS/SA/

Dear Sir

The legality of the use of force against Iraq

We enclose a copy letter sent today to the Secretary of State for Defence.

We are sure that your lawyers will advise you as to its contents and implications. It deals with the consequences for you, and other leaders of the UK Government, if the UK decides to become involved in the further use of force in Iraq, and if that use of force violates rules of international humanitarian law (IHL). Specifically, we make clear that if the UK acts so as to bring any breaches of IHL within the definition of "war crimes" we, and others, will take steps to ensure that you, and other leaders of the UK Government are held accountable within International Criminal Law.

Please would you acknowledge receipt of this letter.

Yours faithfully

Public Interest Lawyers

The Right Honourable Tony Blair
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

Fax: 0207 925 0918

22 January 2003

Your ref:

Our ref: PS/SA/

Dear Prime Minister

The legality of the use of force against Iraq

We enclose a copy of a letter sent today to your Cabinet colleagues, the Secretaries of State for Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

We are sure that your lawyers will advise you as to its contents and implications. It deals with the consequences for you, and other leaders of the UK Government, if the UK decides to become involved in the further use of force in Iraq, and if that use of force violates rules of international humanitarian law (IHL). Specifically, we make clear that if the UK acts so as to bring any breaches of IHL within the definition of "war crimes" we, and others, will take steps to ensure that you, and other leaders of the UK Government are held accountable within International Criminal Law.

We wish to address an additional and important point. It concerns your personal responsibility for the crime of aggression and a crime against peace. It is our clients' position that in present circumstances it appears likely that a decision by the UK Government to use further force against Iraq without a specific Security Council authorisation (which is as we write absent) will be a crime of aggression and, therefore, accordingly, a crime against peace. On the question of an authorisation from the Security Council we note that you told the House of Commons Liaison Committee on 21 January 2003 that the UK would be willing to use force against Iraq without a Security Council authorisation and specifically if one of the Permanent Members vetoed a resolution authorising force. Thus, as far as aggression is concerned, we wish to draw your attention to a specific passage of our attached letter to the Secretary of State for Defence in which we write:

"We wish to raise with you at the outset of this letter our clients' concerns that the UK Government (and its leaders) are about to use force in circumstances where a "crime of aggression" is being committed and, thus, a "crime against peace." Our reasoning on this is as follows:

1. You will be aware that the crime of aggression is included under Article 5 of the ICC Statute as one of the crimes along with genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, over which the ICC has jurisdiction. The ICC may not yet exercise jurisdiction over this crime, however, and will not be able to do so until an agreed definition of the crime is adopted in accordance with Articles 121 and 123 of the ICC Statute. There is nonetheless a broad consensus that the crime of aggression is a crime under international law.
2. Crimes against peace were punishable under Principle 6 of the Nuremberg Principles. Principle 6 defines crimes against peace as
 - i) Planning, preparation, initiation or waging of a war of aggression or a war in violation of international treaties, agreements or assurances;
 - ii) Participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of any of the acts mentioned under (i).
3. The International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg described aggression as the 'supreme international crime.'
4. The outlawing of aggressive war is reflected in Articles 1 and 2 of the United Nations Charter, and in particular in the prohibition on the use of force at Article 2(4). Article 1 (1) of the United Nations Charter states that the Purposes of the United Nations are (amongst other things)

"To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace."

Article 2 states

"..(3) All Members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered.

(4) All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations."

5. On 9 September 2002 the Assembly of States Parties to the ICC Statute adopted a resolution proposed by the Preparatory Commission for the International Criminal Court in which it stated that it was desirous of continuing and completing the work on the crime of aggression and to that end established a special Working Group on the crime of aggression. The

discussion paper which was attached to the Preparatory Commission's Draft Resolution suggested the following basic definition of the crime:

"For the purpose of the present Statute, a person commits a "crime of aggression" when, being in a position effectively to exercise control over or to direct the political or military action of a State, that person intentionally and knowingly orders or participates actively in the planning, preparation, initiation or execution of an act of aggression which, by its character, gravity and scale, constitutes a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations."

6. Paragraph 2 of the discussion paper suggested that act of aggression be defined as an act referred to in United Nations General Assembly resolution 3314 (XXIX) ("**Resolution 3314**") of 14 December 1974. Article 1 of Resolution 3314 states:

"Aggression is the use of armed force by a State against the sovereignty, territorial integrity or political independence of another State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations, as set out in this Definition."

Article 3 provides as follows:

"Any of the following acts, regardless of a declaration of war, shall, subject to and in accordance with the provisions of article 2, qualify as an act of aggression:

- (a) The invasion or attack by the armed forces of a State of the territory of another State, or any military occupation, however temporary, resulting from such invasion or attack, or any annexation by the use of force of the territory of another State or part thereof,
- (b) Bombardment by the armed forces of a State against the territory of another State or the use of any weapons by a State against the territory of another State;
- (c) The blockade of the ports or coasts of a State by the armed forces of another State;
- (d) An attack by the armed forces of a State on the land, sea or air forces, or marine and air fleets of another State;
- (e) The use of armed forces of one State which are within the territory of another State with the agreement of the receiving State, in contravention of the conditions provided for in the agreement or any extension of their presence in such territory beyond the termination of the agreement;

- (f) The action of a State in allowing its territory, which it has placed at the disposal of another State, to be used by that other State for perpetrating an act of aggression against a third State;
- (g) The sending by or on behalf of a State of armed bands, groups, irregulars or mercenaries, which carry out acts of armed force against another State of such gravity as to amount to the acts listed above, or its substantial involvement therein.
7. It is the widely held view of legal experts in the field that in the absence of the inherent right arising to take action in self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter, any military action taken by the United Kingdom against Iraq without a United Nations Security Council Resolution expressly authorising such force would be in clear violation of the UN Charter and international law.¹²²

Thus the purpose of this letter is to put you on notice of two consequences of an illegal use of force against Iraq by the UK. First, as it is you who exercises the prerogative power to wage war it is you who will ultimately be held responsible for the crime of aggression and "crime against peace" we refer to above; second you and other leaders of the UK Government will be held accountable to the ICC in the Hague as we make clear in the attached letter to the Defence Secretary.

Please acknowledge receipt of this letter.

Yours faithfully

Public Interest Lawyers

¹ See Opinion of Professor Colin Warbrick, 30 October 2002, at www.matrixlaw.co.uk, and Opinion of Professor Vaughan Lowe of 19 December 2002 at http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/today/reports/international/iraq_hearing.shtml; ; Opinion of Rabinder Singh QC and Alison Macdonald, 10 September 2002; Opinion of Rabinder Singh QC and Charlotte Kilroy, 15 November 2002.

The Freedom of Information Center

Turning the tanks on the reporters. Iraq will go down as the war when journalists seemed to become a target, writes Philip Knightley

The Observer
Sunday June 15, 2003

The Pentagon made it clear from the beginning of the Iraq war that there would be no censorship. What it failed to say was that war correspondents might well find themselves in a situation similar to that in Korea in 1950. This was described by one American correspondent as the military saying: 'You can write what you like - but if we don't like it we'll shoot you.' The figures in Iraq tell a terrible story. Fifteen media people dead, with two missing, presumed dead. If you consider how short the campaign was, Iraq will be notorious as the most dangerous war for journalists ever.

This is bad enough. But - and here we tread on delicate ground - it is a fact that the largest single group of them appear to have been killed by the US military.

Brigadier General Vince Brooks, deputy director of operations, has told us the Americans do not target journalists. But some war correspondents do not believe him, and Spanish journalists have demonstrated outside the US embassy in Madrid shouting 'murderers'. I believe that the traditional relationship between the military and the media - one of restrained hostility - has broken down, and the US administration has decided its attitude to war correspondents is the same as that set out by President Bush when declaring war on terrorists: 'You're either with us or against us.'

Journalists prepared to get on side - and that means 100 per cent on side - will become 'embeds' and get every assistance. Any who follow an objective, independent path, the so-called 'unilaterals', will be shunned. And those who report from the enemy side will risk being shot.

The media should have seen it coming. Last year the BBC sent one of its top reporters, Nik Gowing, to Washington to try to find out how it was that its correspondent, William Reeve, who had just re-opened the Corporation's studio in Kabul and was giving a live TV interview for BBC World, was blown out of his seat by an American smart missile. Four hours later, a few blocks away, the office and residential compound of the Arab TV network Al-Jazeera was hit by two more American missiles.

The BBC, Al-Jazeera, and the US Committee to Protect Journalists thought it prudent to find out from the Pentagon what steps they could take to protect their correspondents if war came to Iraq. Rear Admiral Craig Quigley was frank. He said the Pentagon was indifferent to media activity in territory controlled by the enemy, and that the Al-Jazeera compound in Kabul was considered a legitimate target because it had 'repeatedly been the location of significant al-Qaeda activity'. It turned out that this activity was interviews with Taliban officials, something Al-Jazeera had thought to be normal journalism.

All three organisations concluded that the Pentagon was determined to deter western correspondents from reporting any war from the 'enemy' side; would view such journalism in Iraq as activity of 'military significance', and might well bomb the area. This view was reinforced in the early days of the war in Iraq, when the Pentagon wrote officially to Al-Jazeera asking it to remove its correspondents from Baghdad. Downing Street made the same request to the BBC. In the US a Pentagon official called media bosses to a meeting in Washington to tell them how foolhardy and dangerous it was to have correspondents in the Iraqi capital. But no one realised it might also be dangerous to work outside the system the Pentagon had devised for allowing war correspondents to cover the war: embedding. In total, 600 correspondents, including about 150 from foreign media, and even one from the music network MTV, accepted the Pentagon's offer to be with military units.

I found only one instance of an embedded correspondent who wrote a story highly critical of the behaviour of US troops and which went against the official account of what had occurred. On 31 March, American soldiers opened fire on a civilian van that had failed to stop at a checkpoint, killing seven Iraqi women and children. US officials said the driver of the car failed to stop after

<http://foi.missouri.edu/jouratrisk/turning.html>



warning shots and that troops had fired at the passenger cabin as 'a last resort'.

But William Branigin, of the Washington Post, embedded with the Third Infantry, witnessed the shooting. He reported that no warning shot was fired and that 10 people, not seven, were killed. It will be interesting to see what becomes of Branigin's relations with the US military. For the rest of the embeds, the conclusion of veteran New York Times journalist Sydney H Schanberg applies: 'Embedded means you're there,' he said. 'It also means you're stuck'.

But that is what the Pentagon wanted, and after the death of ITN reporter Terry Lloyd, and the probable deaths of two of his team (they're still listed as missing) who had been operating unilaterally, the Coalition Commander, General Tommy Franks, pointed out that no embedded correspondent had been killed.

What Franks did not reveal was exactly how Lloyd died. Now, more than a month after Lloyd's death, neither the Ministry of Defence nor the Pentagon has told ITN what the investigation into his death has revealed. It may turn out this was an unfortunate accident, another 'friendly fire' incident. But what happened at the Palestine Hotel was a different matter. On 8 April, three war correspondents were killed when an American tank fired a shell at the suite on the 15th floor. Tarek Ayyoub, a cameraman for Al-Jazeera, was killed when a US plane bombed the channel's office in Baghdad. American forces also opened fire on the offices of Abu Dhabi TV, whose identity is spelled out in large letters on the roof.

In the Iraq war the Pentagon regarded Al-Jazeera as an enemy propaganda station, putting out devastating accounts of Iraqi civilian casualties to a vast Arab audience, fuelling anti-American sentiment. Al-Jazeera was apprehensive about US reaction and repeatedly informed the US military of the exact co-ordinates of its Baghdad office. It was a waste of time. The Pentagon has offered neither explanation nor apology.

When the news of the Palestine Hotel attack first came, the American command said nothing until it emerged that the French TV channel, France 3, had filmed the tank aiming and firing. Then the coalition put out a series of contradictory accounts. Colonel David Perkins, commander of the Third Infantry Division's Second Brigade, said Iraqis in front of the hotel were firing rocket-propelled grenades at the tank. The division's commander, General Bouford Blount, issued a statement saying the tank had come under sniper fire from the hotel roof and had fired at the source of the shooting, which had then stopped.

Correspondents in the Palestine Hotel insisted there had been no grenades and no sniper fire. But the most telling evidence is that France 3's cameraman had started filming some minutes before the tank opened fire, and his camera's sound track records no shots whatsoever.

More puzzling was an official Spanish government statement that the coalition had actually declared the Palestine Hotel a military objective 48 hours before it was attacked and that the correspondents should have left. This was news to the correspondents, all of whom denied knowledge of any warning.

I am convinced that in the light of all the evidence the Pentagon is determined there will be no more reporting from the enemy side, and a few deaths among the correspondents who do will deter others. And the Pentagon's policy will work. Al-Jazeera seriously considered pulling all of its correspondents out of Iraq because it could not guarantee their safety. Arab TV and British media bosses will think twice in any future war of sending staff reporters to the enemy side - not least because insurers will refuse to underwrite the risk. I think the Pentagon is not concerned in the slightest about its attacks on journalists because it is convinced that the public will support its view and its actions.

With five out of 10 Americans believing that most of the terrorists who carried out the attack on 11 September were Iraqis, the American media decided that its readers and viewers were not interested in the plight of Iraqi victims. The New York Times said it aimed to capture the true nature of the war but avoid 'the gratuitous use of images simply for shock value'. The biggest radio group in the US, Clear Channel, used its stations to organise pro-war rallies. McVay Media, one of America's largest communications consulting companies, advised its radio clients to play 'patriotic music that makes you cry, salute and get cold chills', and under no circumstances cover war protests. When New York magazine writer Michael Wolff broke ranks at the coalition's daily press

conference at Qatar and asked General Brooks: 'Why are we here? Why should we stay? What's the value of what we're learning at this million-dollar press centre?' Fox TV attacked him for lack of patriotism, and right-wing commentator Rush Limbaugh gave out Wolff's email address - in one day he received 3,000 hate emails. Finally, a mysterious civilian in army uniform took him aside and told him: 'This is a fucking war, asshole. No more questions for you.' Wolff realised that the press conferences were not for the benefit of correspondents. The correspondents were extras in a piece of theatre. The farce could not have taken place if the correspondents had gone home, but given the competitive nature of war reporting, there was no danger of that.

Let's finish with a look at the image that everyone will still remember when the debate and all issues are long forgotten. As seen on television and on the front pages of newspapers around the world, cheering Iraqis attach a rope and a chain to Saddam's neck then call on the services of an American vehicle to haul him down. The statue hesitates, bends at the knees and topples into the dust. In an information war heavy with symbolism, this marked the end of Saddam Hussein and the coalition's victory.

But this image was not quite what it seemed. The statue was pulled down by American troops using American equipment - the Iraqis on their own would not have been able to do it.

Although there were lots of other statues, the toppling of this one took place opposite the Palestine Hotel, where most members of the international media were still staying. Without the media, the event would have meant nothing. Long-distance shots show that the Iraqis who helped topple the statue and later celebrated its fall numbered no more than 100.

So what happened? Was it as portrayed - a spontaneous outpouring of joy by ordinary Iraqis? Or was it a photo opportunity, a staged event in the theatre of propaganda? Excited TV presenters told their viewers they were witnessing history. But whose history?

- Philip Knightley is the author of 'First Casualty' (Carlton), a history of war correspondents and propaganda.

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News

U.S. Soldiers Still Kill Iraqis Unprovoked: Report

BAGHDAD, August 17 (IslamOnline.net & News Agencies) – Further Igniting anti-American outrage among ordinary Iraqis, trigger-happy U.S. soldiers continue to kill innocent people already suffering in the war-shattered country, a press report said on Sunday, August 17.

Ezhar Mahmood Ridha and her sister-in-law were on their way to a wake when they met their deaths at the hands of U.S. soldiers, according to the report by the *Chicago Tribune* newspaper.

As their broken-down car stood stranded on a dusty overpass, a guerrilla fighter nearby detonated a huge explosive device at a passing U.S. military convoy. As the soldiers turned and fired, the car carrying the assailant sped away, according to witnesses and U.S. military officials.

The Americans hit the only object left on the overpass: Ridha's blue 1982 Mitsubishi sedan, said the report.

Witnesses said that bullets ripped through Ridha's body, as she slumped over in the back seat, eyes frozen, while her 6-month-old baby slipped from her arms.

The shooting at dusk on August 1 was just one of dozens of cases in which civilians have been caught in the crossfire.

The firing warranted only a five-paragraph statement from the U.S. military public affairs office in Iraq, said the report.

The family was headed from their village about 15 miles north of Baghdad to attend the wake of a relative when the car sputtered to a halt, according to



Ordinary Iraqis complain about random U.S. military shooting

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Al-Tumaymi and his two brothers.

It was broiling hot, the family members recounted. The 6-month-old was crying. Ridha called to her husband to hurry up as he bent over the hood cleaning the gasoline filter.

Al-Tumaymi was about to restart the car when he heard the first gunshots.

"The shooting began everywhere," recalled Al-Tumaymi. "They were targeting right inside the car".

Al-Tumaymi stripped off his white Arab tunic, called a dishdash, and frantically waved it at the troops to stop shooting.

"He was screaming, 'We are a family! Don't shoot!'" said Louay Ismael, a witness who raced out of his home after hearing the explosion. "He was crying".

Four bullets ripped through the right side of the vehicle, shattering the windows.

"As his brother Salam crawled away to get help, Al-Tumaymi said he saw that his sister Kameela was badly injured and that both his 18-month-old son and brother Kamil were bleeding from head wounds. His wife, he said, was slumped over in the back seat, motionless.

Al-Tumaymi said he asked Kamil if his wife was dead. Kamil reached over and put his hand to her chest.

"I can still feel her heart," Kamil said.

As Ridha and his sister lay critically injured, Al-Tumaymi said, one officer offered an apology.

"He said, 'May God be merciful to them. We are sorry,'" Al-Tumaymi recalled.

"I said, 'Is that enough?'" Al-Tumaymi remembered. "I said, 'Look at the bodies. Look at my screaming children. Look at us--we have no guns, no bombs. Why did you do this'?"

Al-Tumaymi said he was forced to flag down a passing car and take his wife to the hospital himself, but they soon got caught in traffic. By the time they reached the hospital, Al-Tumaymi said, his wife was dead.

Kameela made it to the emergency room of a second hospital but died minutes later, according to the doctor who treated her.

The cause of death for both women was listed as "fractures and bleeding in the lungs caused by bullets," according to Iraq Health Ministry records, said the *Tribune*.

Outrageous

But the tragedy and its aftermath reveal much about

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the chaotic, unpredictable nature of combat here and how the deaths of civilians can turn residents of an entire village, once sympathetic to the U.S. occupation, into bitter enemies, said the *Tribune*.

In the family's hometown of Hammamiyat, a cluster of tan brick homes housing 2,000 residents on the northern outskirts of Baghdad, tribal leaders are furious at the Americans.

"I hate them! I hate them!" said Jameel Sultan Al-Tumaymi, 40, Ridha's husband and the brother of the second shooting victim, speaking about the troops.

"We were trying to help them, but they are criminals," said Tumaymi.

Ironically enough in an unprovoked shooting attack, Maj. Clark Taylor, a spokesman for the 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division, whose soldiers fired on the Ridha family's car, said the U.S. forces have the right to "defend themselves"

"U.S. soldiers have the right to defend themselves," Taylor said.

Nada Doumani, a spokeswoman for the International Committee of the Red Cross in Iraq, said she understands the dangers facing the troops and the inevitability of civilian casualties in war. But she said the soldiers should use only "proportionate force" when responding to a threat.

"Whenever there is fighting, civilians get killed," Doumani was quoted by the *Tribune* as saying

"But there are always precautions that can be taken in the presence of civilians. We mean that not just for U.S. forces but those who are their attackers. I hope they do this, but I don't know," she added.

In the most recent case, soldiers shot and killed a 12-year-old Iraqi boy during a clash with demonstrators in a sprawling Shiite neighborhood in Baghdad on Wednesday. Two Iraqi police officers were also killed last week by U.S. forces in an apparent case of mistaken identity.

Nadeem Hatim Sultan, a community leader and head of the local branch of the Tameem tribe, said the village had strongly supported the U.S.-led ouster of Hussein, whose regime killed more than 50 villagers because they are Shiite Muslims.

Sultan said he has met frequently with the local U.S. military commander and helped U.S. troops uncover several arms caches.

Tanks stopped by the village only days before the shooting, he said, and residents gave soldiers cold water and food. The soldiers responded by handing out candy to children and helping rebuild several schools.

But Sultan and other tribal elders said they are now rethinking their relationship to the Americans in the wake of the shootings on the overpass.

"We are avoiding [the Americans] now because we consider them dangerous," Sultan told the *Tribune*.

For his part, Al-Tumaymi, an impoverished farmer and sometime taxi driver, recalled with bitterness how Ridha had encouraged their six children to wave in friendship at passing U.S. troops.

Now she is gone, and Al-Tumaymi has no one to help care for them.

"Because of the Americans, they don't have a mother," he said. "The Americans say they believe in freedom. But they only believe in blood".

U.S.-led forces occupying Iraq have faced almost-daily attacks the Americans blamed on loyalists of Saddam's ousted regime.

But anti-American sentiments against forces are running high among many of ordinary Iraqis jeering at continued occupation of their oil-rich country and slow pace of improvement on the ground.

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Saddam's regime**
by John Carlson, The Des Moines Register
August 13th, 2003

The Iraqi leaned close and, in a gesture of sincerity and friendship, touched me on the hand as he spoke.

"Saddam Hussein was a good president," the man said. "Under Saddam, I had freedom. Now it's fear."

It was a short conversation on the outskirts of Baghdad, mostly a monologue from Obaid Ahmad, an Iraqi businessman who smiled, touched and waved his finger as he talked.

The questions were brief, the answers long. He spoke English well and rapidly. It was one Iraqi's view of his country before, and after, the war.

"I was a free person under Saddam," he said. "I had security. I could walk down the streets and no criminals put a gun in my face. Now, it's very bad. I have no security. Iraqis are afraid. Criminals are running the streets of Iraq. Not the police. Not the American Army."

Ahmad, in fact, likes the soldiers who are occupying his country. They're good people, he insisted, and want what's best for Iraqis. He even does a little business with the Army from time to time. Whatever it takes to make a living.

American foreign policy, he said, has damaged his country as much as the bombs that fell here in March and April.

"America removes Saddam. He's gone. Now what? My wife is afraid to drive on the streets. My children can't go swim or go out to play. It's the criminals. They make trouble for me, and they make trouble for you. The Army doesn't stop them, so nobody stops them."

What about the reasons for the war itself?

"This is the important question," he said. "This is what Americans don't understand. Saddam is not a terrorist."

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Osama is not a terrorist. Israel brought the Sept. 11 attacks to America and took down the big buildings."

It's a theory widely repeated and believed by tens of millions in the Muslim and Arab world. Ahmand also is convinced it's true.

"Four thousand Jews who worked in the New York buildings all took the day off on Sept. 11. They knew not to go to the buildings," he said. The Israeli intelligence agency "Mossad was in a nearby place and made it happen. Then, America attacks Arabs. It was Israel that killed so many people. Don't you believe that?"

I told him no, I didn't believe it, and neither did Americans. Many Jews died Sept. 11. Saudis flew the planes into the World Trade Center and Pentagon. I told him I thought his was a preposterous argument.

He laughed.

"OK, you say silly, I say it's so. I believe - I know in my heart - America does what Israel says."

The United States also is making a mistake, Ahmand said, by trying to form a new Iraqi government with an equal representation of Sunni and Shiite Muslims.

"Iraqis don't think about such things," he said. "It makes no difference to us. Americans are making it an issue and forcing this government, all these people in the same room. It causes problems. That's all."

Just look at his family, Ahmand explained.

"I am Sunni, my wife Shiite. Iraqis don't care about this. America puts the people it wants as government in the room. The arguments start. No arguing before. Not with Saddam (a Sunni) in charge. Things were good. Iraqis lived well under Saddam."

I know, I told him. I've been to Saddam's spectacular palaces.

Ahmand laughed again and leaned closer.

"Yes, Saddam's palaces. Very nice places."

What about the rest of the country, the south, where people live in mud huts, probably no differently than 1,000 years ago, or the edges of Baghdad, where some Iraqis live in massive garbage dumps?

"It's not good," he said. "That's very bad. America has bad places to live, too, is that correct?"

Yes, that's correct.

"Most people here have nice places, houses, apartments. Now, 9 p.m., doors locked. Nobody goes outside.

Everybody has a gun. The electricity is on three hours, then off three hours. The water is good. Plenty of water."

What about when the power is off three hours? Is it a problem? Are people angered by the inconvenience?

"No problem for me. I have generators," he said.

You speak of freedom, I asked him. Did you have the freedom to speak under Saddam?

"Sure. Yes. Well, I knew some (government) ministers. You couldn't criticize. Or. . . ."

Ahmand made a slapping motion across his mouth and smiled.

"If a person was a good boy, he had no trouble with Saddam."

It's the thousands of common criminals Saddam freed from prison at the war's end who bring the chaos to the streets here.

"Security," he said again. "It's the most important thing for us. Will the American Army bring security to my country?"

It's a good question.

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1.15pm update

Red Cross 'scales back' Iraq presence

Ros Taylor and agencies
Monday August 25, 2003
The Guardian

The International Red Cross is scaling back its operations in Iraq in response to warnings that the country might be a terrorist target, it was reported today.

Following last week's explosion at the UN's headquarters in Baghdad and continuing attacks on Iraqi civilians, the country's biggest provider of humanitarian aid is reducing its staff to a core of about 50.

Other aid agencies are expected to follow suit, according to the BBC.

"It's a very difficult decision," Nada Boumani of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) told the BBC. "It's a heartbreaking decision for us to reduce our staff."

"We believe these warnings are to be taken seriously," she added. "It's very depressing for the Iraqis to realise that after four months ... they don't feel safe in their own country."

An ICRC worker was shot dead south of Baghdad on July 22, despite travelling in a vehicle displaying ICRC emblems. Nadisha Yasassri Ranmuthu, a 37-year-old Sri Lankan, was in Iraq to install communications facilities and train Iraqi operators. His Iraqi driver was wounded in the attack.

The UN has also scaled back its administrative operations in Iraq after last week's explosion, which killed 20 of its staff.

Yesterday, three Iraqis were killed and nine injured in Najaf during an attempt to assassinate the Shia cleric Grand Ayatollah Seyed Mohammed Said al-Hakim. He escaped with minor injuries but two of his bodyguards were killed.

Thousands of Shia Muslims marched through Najaf today, many of whom blamed a rival Shia leader, Moqtada al-Sadr, for the killings.

"Now there will be revenge," one mourner told Reuters. "The only way to stop this is for the people of Najaf to stop it. We will have to form our own militia."

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Monday, August 4, 2003

Use of depleted uranium weapons lingers as health concern

War's unintended effects

By LARRY JOHNSON

SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER FOREIGN DESK EDITOR

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- The ideal legacy of the war in Iraq is a free and democratic society, but a sinister legacy of another kind is possible as well -- cancers and birth defects.

Depleted uranium weapons used by the U.S.-led forces in the war have left battle sites throughout Iraq contaminated with abnormally high levels of radiation.

Although there is no firm consensus, nuclear experts and laymen alike generally agree that depleted uranium, which is toxic as well as radioactive, is at the very least a *potential* cause of cancers and birth defects. Some Iraqi physicians and others blame depleted uranium weapons used in the 1991 Gulf War for a major increase of cancers and birth defects that occurred a few years later. It is also a prime suspect for the Gulf War Syndrome that has sickened and killed thousands of U.S. veterans.



zoom

Dan DeLong / P-I

A war-damaged Iraqi tank rests along the highway next to a school on the outskirts of Baghdad. Depleted uranium weapons were used in populated areas in Iraq.

The Pentagon and United Nations estimate that U.S. and British forces used 1,100 to 2,200 tons of armor-piercing shells made of depleted uranium during attacks in Iraq in March and April -- far more than the estimated 375 tons used in the 1991 Gulf War.

U.S. tanks, Bradley fighting machines, A-10 attack jets and Apache helicopters routinely used depleted uranium rounds, but in the recent war, the ammunition was used in and near heavily populated areas, not just in the desert.

There are some studies under way that could shed more light on the effects of depleted uranium, a highly complex and poorly understood

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subject. Critics say DU shouldn't be used until the studies have been completed, while supporters, primarily the military, say it is critical to success on the battlefield.

Rep. Jim McDermott, D-Wash., has introduced legislation requiring the U.S. government to conduct studies of DU's effects on health and the environment, and cleanup of DU contamination in the United States. The bill, co-sponsored by 23 other Democrats, remains in committee.

He said DU may well be associated with increased birth defects.

"We continue to get these sporadic reports of various places where a lot of people are getting sick, and nobody is willing to connect the dots yet," he said. "I'm afraid we're going to have a lot of people get sick before they finally admit that depleted uranium really causes a problem for us (U.S. veterans and their families) as well as for the Iraqis."

After NATO's use of DU weapons in Kosovo in 1999, the Council of Europe parliamentarians called for a worldwide ban on the manufacture, testing, use and sale of weapons using depleted uranium, asserting that NATO's use of DU weapons would have "long term effects on health and quality of life in South-East Europe, affecting future generations." The call went unheeded.

An independent policy analyst on the use and effects of DU, in a June 24 report, was critical of both the British and the Americans for not doing more to protect their troops and civilians from DU in Iraq. But the report held criticism for those on all sides of the DU issue.

"What is clear ... is that elements of the U.S. government will manipulate information and even lie about the health of U.S. combat veterans to avoid liability for DU's health and environmental effects," said Dan Fahey, who has testified on DU at a number of congressional hearings. "Equally as clear is the willingness of some anti-DU activists to promote theories as fact, fabricate data and manipulate statistics, and exploit the suffering of people to further political or financial interests."

'A well-established risk'

In June, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer conducted tests at six sites from Basra to Baghdad, and found elevated levels of radiation at all of them. One destroyed tank near Baghdad was 1,500 times more radioactive than normal background radiation. Another was 1,400 times more radioactive than background.

To get additional evidence that DU was used on these tanks, the P-I used swabs of cloth to gather samples of residue from the blackened bullet holes on two tanks on the outskirts of Baghdad, and from the black ash on a tank in Kut.

Bruce Busby, radiation safety officer for Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle analyzed the swabs. Although stressing that far more sophisticated equipment and tests are required to positively identify DU and precisely measure contamination levels, he was able to

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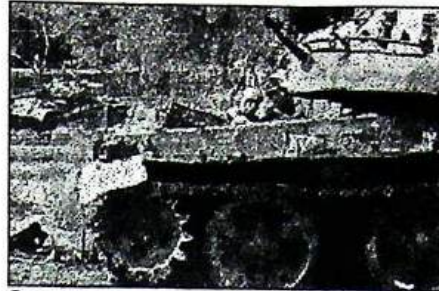
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Convicted
to continue

determine that the swabs had elevated levels of radioactive contamination, consistent with DU. Still, Busby is not convinced it is a severe problem in Iraq. " ... Considering all the other hazards those people are exposed to, this is a small risk," he said.

Others were more alarmed by the P-I findings.

"... if you found it (DU), it's possible kids could get it on their hands by playing on tanks, and adults could inhale re-suspended dust if salvaging equipment," Fahey said.



zoom

Dan DeLong / P-I

Outside Kut in southern Iraq, two young Iraqi men remove parts from one of the many tanks in the area.

Tedd Weyman, deputy director of the Uranium Medical Centre, an independent research group in Canada and Washington, D.C., was also concerned about DU in Iraq.

"... Alpha emitters -- DU is one -- are carcinogenic and ... inhalation exposure of low quantities of low-level radioactive material is a well-established risk," Weyman said. "Externally, the radioactivity travels a very short distance -- centimeters -- before fully releasing all its energy and disintegrating. (But) if inhaled and lying adjacent to cells in the body, it is a serious hazard."

Although the Pentagon has said depleted uranium is the material of choice because its density allows it to slice through heavy tank armor, the Army is currently looking at an alternative. A Florida company, Liquidmetal Technologies, says it can get comparable performance from ammunition using an exotic alloy of tungsten, and if the Army decides to switch, the new rounds could be in service within two years.

The Pentagon has sent mixed signals about the effects of depleted uranium, saying there have been no known health problems associated with the munition. At the same time, the military acknowledges the hazards in an Army training manual, which requires that anyone who comes within 25 meters of any DU-contaminated equipment or terrain wear respiratory and skin protection, and says that "contamination will make food and water unsafe for consumption."

According to the Army Environmental Policy Institute, holding a spent DU round would expose a person to about 200 mrem per hour. That's a level of radiation equivalent to receiving eight chest X-rays per hour, said Tom Carpenter, director of the Government Accountability Project's Nuclear Oversight Campaign. That's also twice the annual radiation exposure limit allowed by the Washington state.

The Environmental Protection Agency Web site says, "There is no firm basis for setting a 'safe' level of exposure (to radiation) above background. Most regulatory and advisory bodies around the world (including EPA) assume that any exposure carries some risk and that the risk increases as the exposure increases."

The April issue of New Scientist magazine reported that Alexandra Miller, a radiobiologist with the Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute in Bethesda, Md., has discovered the first direct evidence that radiation from DU can damage chromosomes. "The chromosomes break, and the fragments reform in a way that results in abnormal joins. Both the breaks and the joins are commonly found in tumor cells," the article says. The implication is that it could cause cancer.

Miller's work suggests that the toxic nature of DU, combined with its radioactivity, could produce effects more dire than either of those characteristics acting alone.

"I think that we assumed that we knew everything that we needed to know about uranium. (But) This is something we have to consider now when we think about risk estimates," the article says.

Cancer on the rise

Researchers aren't the only ones concerned.

The U.S. and British use of DU during the latest conflict, also alarms doctors in Iraq. Cancer had already increased dramatically in southern Iraq. In 1988, 34 people died of cancer; in 1998, 450 died of cancer; in 2001 there were 603 cancer deaths. The rate of birth defects also had risen sharply, according to doctors in Iraq.

Now, doctors in Iraq say, the number of cancers and birth defects may be "devastating."

"This is the right time for active support to help prevent the catastrophic effects of the bombing," said Dr. Alim Yacoub, on his last day as dean of the Al Mustansiriya Medical School in Baghdad.

"It is the right time for our U.S. friends to alleviate the consequences of depleted uranium and dirty weapons," he said.

"If there isn't a centralized health plan soon, the consequences could be devastating," said Yacoub, the foremost Iraqi authority on the effects of DU. Yacoub has tracked the rise of cancer in Iraq for years, and places the blame squarely on DU.

"For the past 12 years, we have only been able to watch what's going on in this country, now it is time for a comprehensive health plan for cleaning up DU and for treating cancer," he said. Yacoub has carefully preserved his studies and is eager to present them to other researchers.

From the cancer ward at the Mother and Child Hospital in Basra, Dr. Janan Ghalib Hassan has also tracked the rise in cancer in Iraq, primarily in the south, for years. It is a phenomena that she also says is most likely caused by the DU used by U.S. forces in the Gulf War in 1991.

"I worked here in this hospital in 1980 and never saw so much cancer, but after 1991, I started to see many more cancer cases," Hassan said.

She said that because the incubation period for cancer is about five years, the effects of the latest war should start showing up in 2008. "I think the number of cancer cases will be as much as 10 times or more higher," she said. "It is a crime; a crime."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

DEPLETED URANIUM

WHAT IT IS:

Depleted uranium is a highly dense, toxic and radioactive metal that is the byproduct of the process during which fissionable uranium used to make nuclear bombs and reactor fuel is separated from natural uranium. The U.S. uses it for bullets and shells.

WHAT IT DOES:

Depleted uranium contains the highly toxic U-238 isotope, which has a radioactive half-life of about 4.5 billion years. As U-238 breaks down, an ongoing process, it creates protactinium-234, which radiates potent beta particles that may cause cancer as well as mutations in body cells that could lead to birth defects.

HOW IT SPREADS:

When a depleted uranium round hits a hard target, as much as 70 percent of the projectile can burn on impact, creating a firestorm of depleted uranium particles. The toxic residue of this firestorm is an extremely fine insoluble uranium dust that can be spread by the wind, inhaled and absorbed into the human body and absorbed by plants and animals, becoming part of the food chain. Once in the soil, it can pollute the environment and create up to a hundredfold increase in uranium levels in ground water, according to the U.N. Environmental Program.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Dan Fahey report

New Scientist article

Uranium Medical Research Centre

U.S. Department of Defense

National Gulf War Resource Center

A P-I special report on Iraq:

P-I foreign desk editor Larry Johnson can be reached at 206-448-8035 or larryjohnson@seattlepi.com