

The Detroit News

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U.S. PRISONERS OF WAR



GRIM DAY FOR U.S.

SOLDIERS KILLED, WOUNDED, TAKEN PRISONER AS RESISTANCE MOUNTS ON ROAD TO BAGHDAD

■ FIRST POWS:

IRAQIS CAPTURE 12 U.S. TROOPS IN ATTACK ON ARMY SUPPLY CONVOY

■ BLOODY BATTLES:

AMBUSHES, FAKE SURRENDERS INFLICT HEAVY CASUALTIES

■ FRIENDLY FIRE:

U.S. PATRIOT MISSILE SHOOT DOWN BRITISH PLANE; 2 FLIERS KILLED

■ AIR ASSAULT:

BOMBS POUND IRAQI CAPITAL AS TROOPS PUSH CLOSER TO CITY

POWs at risk of beatings, isolation

By Carl Weiser
Gannett News Service

WASHINGTON — The U.S. soldiers captured by Iraqi forces could face beatings and humiliation. But just as agonizing, say former prisoners of war, is the isolation and the thoughts of what the family back home must be enduring.

WAR STORY INDEX

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Gulf War reported abysmal treatment by Iraqis. Army Maj. Rhonda Cornum said she was sexually assaulted. Others had their jaws, knees and arms smashed. Lt. Col. Dale Storr told CNN on Sunday that his captors would blindfold and handcuff him, then walk him into a concrete wall as they laughed hysterically.

"In the initial hours, you're faced with the unknown," retired Air Force Col. David Eberly told Gannett News Service. "It's the unknown that haunts the families and friends."

"The worst thing is the families. You know how you're doing as a person," said Eberly, who was shot down over Iraq in 1991 and taken prisoner. "The families don't, so that's the worst part."

On Sunday, a videotape aired on the the Qatar-based satellite channel Al-Jazeera showed four American soldiers in Iraqi captivity — including one woman — being interviewed. Iraq said it would adhere to the Geneva Conventions, which require humane treatment of prisoners.

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U.S. Marines from Task Force Tarawa carry a wounded colleague in An Nasiriyah. The Marines suffered the heaviest casualties yet during gun battles throughout the southern Iraqi city.

Iraqi returns to free his people

Freedom Fighter from Dearborn helps battlefield troops.

By John Bebow
The Detroit News

SOUTHERN IRAQ — Hours into the war, a group of Iraqi shepherds turned and ran at the sight of a U.S. Marines convoy.

"Don't run!" Arka Arkawazi shouted in Arabic from a Marine Humvee. "We are here to help."

Within minutes, Arkawazi made friends with the shepherds, who soon led Marines to an Iraqi Army stash of 12 AK-47 rifles, three anti-aircraft guns and military documents.



"I've waited for this for 10 years," said Iraqi Freedom Fighter Arka Arkawazi, who cannot be shown for fear his family will face reprisals. Arkawazi helps Marines on the front lines.

Arkawazi, who lived in Dearborn the past three years, is one of an unknown number of Iraqi Freedom Fighters who once fled the regime of Saddam Hussein only to return now with the U.S.

military invasion force. "I've waited for this for 10 years," said Arkawazi, a 39-year-old Shiite Muslim from a town in central Iraq. The Detroit News is not naming his

Iraqi hometown because he fears Saddam's Republican Guard may attack family members of Freedom Fighters.

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Detroit News wire services

AN NASIRIYAH, Iraq — Iraq used ambushes and fake surrenders to kill and capture U.S. troops Sunday, inflicting the first significant casualties on soldiers pushing to Baghdad.

Up to nine Marines died and a dozen U.S. soldiers were taken prisoner in surprise engagements with Iraqis at An Nasiriyah, a southern city far from the forward positions of the allied force.

Things could get worse, U.S. military commanders warned.

The ground war in Iraq will likely intensify as coalition troops advance toward Baghdad and prepare to clash with Iraq's heavily armed Republican Guard units.

"I think it's reasonable to expect that it might be much more fierce," Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said.

On a day when U.S.-British coalition forces fought to within 100 miles of Baghdad, friendly fire also spiked the allied death toll: A U.S. Patriot missile battery shot down a British plane, killing the two fliers aboard, and a soldier was killed in Kuwait by a fellow GI who lobbed hand grenades into the command tents of the 101st Airborne Division.

Soldiers fighting near An Nasiriyah came under attack from a series of ruses. One group of Iraqis waving the white flag of surrender opened up with artillery fire, while another group appeared to welcome coalition troops and instead attacked them.

Lt. Gen. John Abizaid of U.S. Central Command said the fake surrender set off the "sharpest engagement of the war thus far."

"We, of course, will be much more cautious in the way that we view the battlefield as a result of some of these incidents," he said.

Arab television showed four Americans dead in an Iraqi morgue and at least five other captured Americans. Twelve U.S. soldiers are missing and presumed captured by Iraqis in an ambush on a supply convoy that took a wrong turn at An Nasiriyah.

"I come to shoot only if I am shot at," said one prisoner, who said he was from Kansas. Asked why he was fighting Iraqis, he replied: "They don't bother me; I don't bother them."

Developments

HUNT FOR PILOT: Hundreds of Iraqi police and security agents searched for a possibly downed coalition pilot Sunday, shooting into the reeds and shallow water alongside Baghdad's Tigris River. They set fire to brush in some spots, and small boats patrolled the river's edge. Army Lt. Gen. John Abizaid denied that any coalition planes had been shot down.

BAGHDAD BOMBED: Journalists reported some of the most intense bombing of the Iraqi capital today since the war began.

COPTER CRASHES: A U.S. Air Force helicopter on a medical evacuation mission crashed in eastern Afghanistan on Sunday, killing all six U.S. servicemen aboard. The cause is under investigation, but officials said the helicopter was not brought down by enemy fire.

The accidental downing of a British plane by a U.S. Patriot missile battery was another blow to allied forces.

The Tornado GR4 was returning from a mission early Sunday when it was shot down near the Iraqi border with Kuwait.

Group Capt. Al Lockwood acknowledged the bad start of the campaign for the British, who have suffered three aerial accidents, killing 16. It was "not one we would have chosen, I have to say, but this you must remember is high-intensity conflict. This is war and it's not training." In Kuwait, U.S. officials held Sgt. Asan Akbar of the 326th Engineer Battalion in connection with the grenade attack on his fellow servicemen. Capt. Christopher Scott Seifert, 27, died, and 15 others were wounded.

Akbar has not been charged with any crime, Fort Campbell spokesman George Heath said, adding that Akbar had been "having what some might call an attitude problem."



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