



NCAA tournament reaches Sweet Sixteen — B1

Hyrum woman helps in school four days a week — A3

Fighting gets fiercer

21 American soldiers killed or captured

By Calvin Woodward
Associated Press Writer

U.S.-led forces suffered their worst casualties of the war Sunday in two bloody battles near An Nasiriyah that raged for hours before Iraqi resistance was vanquished. Marines said they would move around the city rather than march through it on the road to Baghdad.

The battles at An Nasiriyah drew some attention from the relentless advance of the U.S.-led forces, now less than 100 miles from Baghdad after four days of the ground war. Outside Najaf, at the northern end of the advance, U.S. soldiers skirmished with Iraqi forces before dawn Monday.

Iraq used ambushes and even fake surrenders to kill or capture up to 21 American troops on Sunday, inflicting the first significant casualties on the allied forces driving toward Baghdad. U.S. war leaders declared the invasion on target despite the bloody setbacks.

Up to nine Marines died and a dozen U.S. soldiers were taken prisoner in



AP photos

Self-propelled guns and other U.S. military vehicles are parked in the desert near An Nasiriyah, southern Iraq, on Sunday. U.S.-led forces suffered their worst casualties of the war Sunday in two bloody battles near An Nasiriyah.

Captured Americans shown on Iraqi TV

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Looking by turns frightened or stoical, five captured U.S. soldiers were thrust in front of an Iraqi TV microphone and peppered with questions Sunday. The footage also showed at least four bodies.

U.S. officials confirmed that 12 soldiers were missing after Iraqi forces ambushed an army supply convoy around An Nasiriyah, a major crossing point over the Euphrates northwest of Basra.

The scenes of interrogators questioning four men and a woman were

broadcast by the Arab satellite station Al-Jazeera with footage from state-controlled Iraqi television. Each was interviewed individually. They spoke into a microphone labeled "Iraqi Television."

A senior defense official said the Pentagon did not know precisely how many captives there might be and would not identify the unit. Some of the prisoners are from Fort Bliss, Texas, said Jean Offutt, a U.S. Army spokeswoman at the base. Several families of the soldiers had gathered at the base Sunday evening, she said. "The mood, of course, is very tragic."

The 507th Maintenance, part of the 11th Air Defense Artillery Brigade, is stationed at Fort Bliss, and at least two of the interviewed prisoners said they were with the 507th.

Al-Jazeera quoted unidentified Iraqi officials as saying the Iraqis are using a defensive tactic of falling back, allowing their enemy to overextend itself and become vulnerable to attack behind the lines.

President Bush, returning to the White House from Camp David, said he did not have all the details of what he called a potential capture but added: "We expect them to be treated humanely, just like we'll treat any prisoners of theirs that we capture humanely. If not, the people who mistreat the prisoners will be treated as war criminals."



Army Specialist Joseph Hudson was identified by his mother.

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AP photo

Supporters of President Bush and U.S. troops rally outside the Kodak Theatre in the Hollywood section Los Angeles on Sunday as crowds gathered for the 75th annual Academy Awards.

Pro-war activists turn out in force

NEW YORK (AP) — A day after massive anti-war rallies attracted thousands across the nation — including more than 100,000 people in a march down Broadway — hundreds of people gathered in Times Square and other cities Sunday to show support for the war in Iraq.

About 600 people waved American flags and chanted "U-S-A! "U-S-A!" at the Times Square demonstration.

"Thank God we have a president who is a real global leader, protecting our liberty

and security, relentless in his pursuit of justice and not bending to the appeasers," said Republican activist Michael Benjamin, who is considering a run for U.S. Senate against Charles Schumer in 2004.

"The entire world community has said time and again that Saddam Hussein is a danger and that he must be disarmed," said former Jersey City Mayor Bret Schundler. "But it is the United States

See ACTIVISTS on A10

U.S. troops checking possible weapons sites

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. forces on Sunday pressed to find the first cache of Saddam Hussein's chemical and biological weapons, seizing a suspected chemical factory in southern Iraq and checking other sites based on leads from captured Iraqis and document.

Officials cautioned it was premature to conclude any forbidden weapons had been located.

Coalition military leaders were keenly interested in a site they took control of in Najaf, south of Baghdad, and were interviewing two captured Iraqi generals for information about Saddam Hussein's suspected biological and chemical weapons.

U.S. Central Command, which oversees the war in Iraq, said in a statement that troops were examining several "sites of interest," but said it was premature to call the Najaf site a chemical weapons factory.

American special operations forces found documents in western Iraq that also could lead to chemical or biological weapons facilities, said Gen. Richard Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Myers said U.S. commandos found the papers along with a cache of millions of rounds of ammunition after a firefight on Saturday, and the discovery "might save thousands of lives if we can find out exactly where and what they have."

"I just know that they have some papers that they want to exploit as quickly as possible, and we're going to do that, of course," Myers said.

President Bush and other U.S. officials say ridding Saddam Hussein's regime of chemical and biological weapons is the main objective of the war. Finding such weapons would be a huge boost for Bush, since much of the international criticism of the U.S.-led war has focused on the fact that United Nations inspectors had not found any banned weapons in Iraq.

Saddam's government denies it has any chemical, biological or nuclear weapons or programs to produce them.

Asked at a news conference in Qatar Sunday about reports of the chemical plant, Lt. Gen. John Abizaid of U.S. Central Command declined comment.

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Chemical plant

U.S. troops found a suspected chemical factory near the city of Najaf, about 85 miles south of Baghdad, and were trying to determine whether it was involved in making chemical weapons, U.S. officials said.



SOURCES: ESRI; Associated Press

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Weather



Partly cloudy, with highs about 45

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'Chicago' wins best picture, 5 other Oscars

Brody, Kidman win lead acting awards

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The razzledazzle musical satire "Chicago" won the Academy Award as best picture Sunday, while top acting honors struck a more somber note: Adrien Brody as a Holocaust survivor in "The Pianist" and Nicole Kidman as suicidal novelist Virginia Woolf in "The Hours."

In a ceremony overshadowed by the U.S.-led war in Iraq, "Chicago" became the first musical since 1968's "Oliver!" to win the top Oscar and also took home the most trophies, six. Its other awards were supporting actress for Catherine Zeta-Jones, and four technical honors including costume design and art direction.

Veteran character actor Chris Cooper

won as best supporting actor for his role as scraggly-haired, toothless horticultural poacher in "Adaptation."

Brody's victory was something of a surprise, as was the awarding of the best-director Oscar to Roman Polanski, also for "The Pianist." Polanski has been an exile from the United States since fleeing 25 years ago to avoid sentencing for having sex with a 13-year-old girl.

"The Pianist" also won the adapted-screenplay award for Ronald Harwood, giving it a total of three, while Pedro Almodovar earned the original-screenplay prize for "Talk to Her."

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75TH ANNUAL ACADEMY AWARDS 'Chicago' wins best picture

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Picture
"Chicago"

Actress
Nicole Kidman, "The Hours"

Actor
Adrien Brody, "The Pianist"

Director
Roman Polanski, "The Pianist"

Supporting Actress
Catherine Zeta-Jones, "Chicago"

Supporting Actor
Chris Cooper, "Adaptation"

SOURCE: Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences

AP

