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IRAQ STEPS UP FIGHT

21 U.S. TROOPS KILLED OR CAPTURED ON SINGLE DAY

Defying war rules, Iraq questions U.S. soldiers on TV

BY DANICA KIRKA
The Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar — Looking by turns frightened or stoical, five captured U.S. soldiers were thrust in front of an Iraqi TV microphone and peppered with questions yesterday. 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 al-Jazeera with footage from state-controlled Iraqi television. Each was interviewed individually.

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 last night, she said. "The mood, of course, is very tragic."

The 507th Maintenance, part of the 111th Air Defense Artillery Brigade, is stationed at Fort Bliss, and at least two of the interviewed prison-

SEE POWS, A6



Marines from Task Force Tarawa carry a wounded comrade during a gunbattle in the Iraqi city of An Nasiriyah, where some of the fiercest fighting took place.

JOE RAEDLE / GETTY IMAGES

Despite setbacks, plan still on target, war leaders say

BY CALVIN WOODWARD
The Associated Press

Iraq used ambushes and even fake surrenders to kill or capture up to 21 American troops yesterday, 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 surprise engagements with Iraqis at An Nasiriyah, a southern city far from the forward positions of the allied force.

An address vowing that "victory will be ours soon" from President Saddam Hussein to his nation was televised early this morning.

He clearly appeared to be trying to rally his people: "These decisive days, oh you Iraqis are in line with what God has ordered you to do, to cut their throats. Those who are believers will be victorious. In these decisive days, the enemy tried not using missiles and fighter jets as they did before. This time, they sent their infantry troops. This time, they have come to invade and occupy your land."

He told the people of Iraq's second largest city, Basra, which has been isolated but not occupied by allied forces, to be patient because "victory is imminent."

On the third day of the ground war, any expectation that Iraqi defenders would simply fold was gone.

"Clearly they are not a beaten force," said Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "This is going to get a lot harder."

Even so, the U.S.-British coalition

SEE CLASHES, A7

INSIDE

► Rumors of a parachuting pilot send Iraqi searchers into the reeds of the Tigris River **SEE A4**

► Friendly fire from coalition forces downs British fighter jet **SEE A4**

► A ride into An Nasiriyah turns deadly as rockets and rifles are turned on U.S. Marines **SEE A6**

► A call to duty from Fort Lewis will leave 15-month-old Jaden without his mom and dad for who knows how long **SEE A8**

► Day of protests in Seattle include 21 arrests at the Jackson Federal Building **SEE A9**

► President Bush demands that American soldiers held captive be treated humanely **SEE A10**

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A British soldier watches oil wells on fire in southern Iraq. Coalition forces have asked Kuwaiti help in extinguishing some oil wells in Iraq.

BRUCE ADAMS / AFP

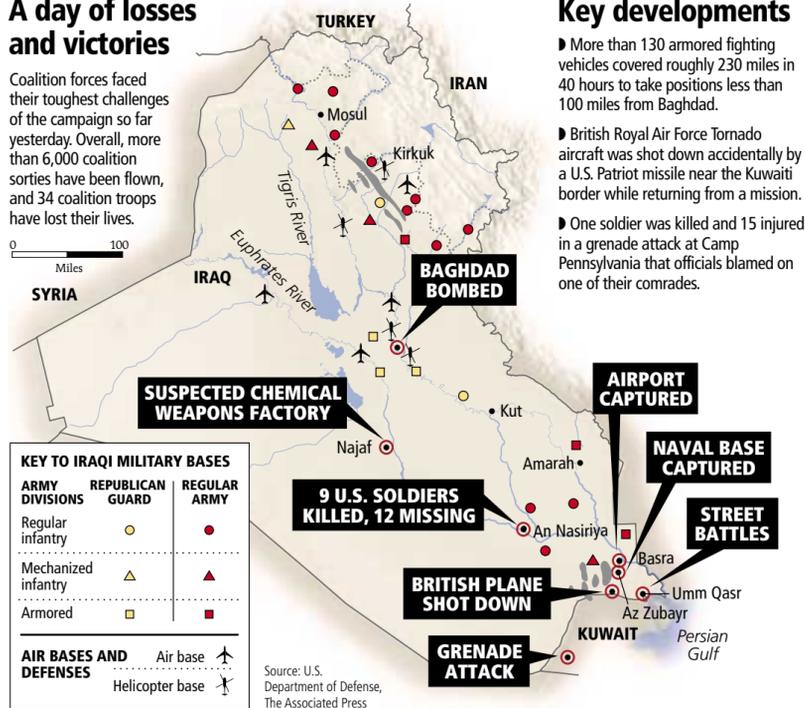


U.S. Marines from the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit fire a missile during a battle with Iraqi troops at the port in Umm Qasr, Iraq, yesterday.

SIMON WALKER / THE LONDON TIMES

A day of losses and victories

Coalition forces faced their toughest challenges of the campaign so far yesterday. Overall, more than 6,000 coalition sorties have been flown, and 34 coalition troops have lost their lives.



Key developments

- More than 130 armored fighting vehicles covered roughly 230 miles in 40 hours to take positions less than 100 miles from Baghdad.
- British Royal Air Force Tornado aircraft was shot down accidentally by a U.S. Patriot missile near the Kuwaiti border while returning from a mission.
- One soldier was killed and 15 injured in a grenade attack at Camp Pennsylvania that officials blamed on one of their comrades.

Casualties mount

Eighteen U.S. and 16 British troops have been confirmed killed as of yesterday. Late reports of unconfirmed deaths may not be included.

KILLED	WHEN	WHERE	HOW
4 U.S. 8 British	Friday	Kuwait	Helicopter crash
2 U.S.	Friday	Iraq	In action
1 U.S. 6 British	Saturday	Persian Gulf	Helicopter collision
1 U.S.	Saturday	Kuwait	Grenade attack
1 U.S.	Yesterday	Kuwait	Vehicle accident
9 U.S.	Yesterday	An Nasiriyah	Fake Iraqi surrender
2 British	Yesterday	Kuwait	Jet shot down in friendly fire

MISSING	WHEN	WHERE	HOW
12 U.S.	Yesterday	An Nasiriyah	Believed captured

OTHER CASUALTIES

- Iraqi officials reported 77 civilians killed in Basra.
- Australian photographer killed in a bomb blast in Iraq.
- British TV journalist believed killed over the weekend.

SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER

ABOARD THE USS LINCOLN

Routine governs, especially during war

BY M.L. LYKE
P-I reporter

ABOARD THE USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN IN THE PERSIAN GULF — In the heat of war, sailors scrub the heads, aircraft mechanics grease gears, the mail comes in on a Greyhound plane. Cooks flip flapjacks and mess hands swab decks. The disarming office cashes checks, the priest celebrates Mass, off-duty seamen tune to the action movie "Triple X."

Forty-eight hours after Operation Iraqi Freedom is announced, it could be any other day on this 1,092-foot warship. "The only thing that has changed is that we have to walk around bombs on the hangar bay," said Angela Jackson, a 19-year-old from Portland, doing duty in the mess hall.

As the ship shudders from returning fighter jets, emptied of ammo, Jackson's hours tick off like always below decks: shower, eat, muster, smoke, work, clean.

It's the same way, different day. Bombs burst over Baghdad. The seamen continue their 12-hour days, six days a week, seven if they pull Sunday duty. Some compare life aboard to "Groundhog Day." They're stuck in a single day and can't get out.

But this "Groundhog Day" has a "Dr. Strangelove" twist.

SEE ROUTINE, A5