

## Mourning turns into suicide revenge

US puts Baghdad advance on hold; suicide attack kills five US soldiers in Najaf; one UK serviceman dies in 'friendly fire'; missiles damage information ministry complex



PHOTO: BBC

A coalition soldier on a tank keeps a watch on a road to the southern Iraqi city of Basra where severe fighting between Anglo-American forces and Iraqi soldiers was reported.

STAR DESK

Mourning turned into revenge barely 12 hours after Friday's marketplace carnage, as a suicide bomber on a taxi killed five American soldiers in south-central Iraq yesterday.

A driver pulled up his taxi near a checkpoint in Najaf, waved for help, and as US troops approached, he blew himself up along the five soldiers. It was the second suicide attack, the first having destroyed an invading tank.

Four marines with the 1st Expeditionary Force, which is engaged in a battle at Nassiriyah,

were reported missing.

In central Iraq on Friday, a soldier was killed and five injured when their Bradley fighting vehicle rolled over, said the Central Command. At Divaniyah, a marine died and another was wounded in fighting with Iraqi irregulars at a cement plant.

But the invaders suffered another rude awakening, as their long supply line was almost cut off by Iraqi hit-and-run guerrillas. Troops fatigued, food and ammunition running low -- so low that many troops had to live on one meal a day -- and the Iraqi forces and civilians getting even more

dangerous, the Anglo-American forces halted their push for Baghdad for four to six days.

They however continued bombings on Baghdad, making the line between civilian and military targets blurry.

Under the sky blanketed with smokes from burning oilfields and explosions, Baghdad grieved over the dead, the number now 62, in Friday's rocket attack. The city shakes with Tomahawks slamming all around. And life has become more insecure, as people now know the invaders are not targeting any specific area, but Baghdad wholesale.

At least one missile yesterday struck the information ministry complex, the usual venue for government news conferences.

The missile appeared to have pierced the roof of the main 11-storey building, breaking aerials and satellite dishes.

But a television camera on the information ministry roof was still filming after the blast, indicating that if the building had been targeted, it was not destroyed.

Anti-aircraft fire lit the sky as the sound of warplanes droned overhead. The city's mosques blared calls for prayers over loudspeakers

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PHOTO: AFP

Six-year-old Iraqi Mahmoud Jassem, left, lies on a bed at the Mahmoudiya Hospital in Baghdad. Mahmoud, injured on the steps of his home in al-Yussufiah neighborhood during a coalition raid, lost his 14-year-old sister. An injured Iraqi, right, flashes a V-sign on his hospital bed in Baghdad yesterday.

## Pause on road to Baghdad means time for Saddam

REUTERS, Doha

With every day that Baghdad holds out against US cruise missiles and advancing land forces, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein gains time -- perhaps the only thing he can hope to win in a war against the United States.

U.S. military sources said yesterday commanders had ordered a pause of four to six days in the push toward Baghdad because of supply shortages and stiff Iraqi resistance.

The reported delay -- while denied by the U.S. Central Command -- raises the possibility the war could stretch into a third week or beyond, dashing the pre-invasion hopes of moderate Arab states that it would all be over swiftly.

No Western military expert believes Iraqi forces can win militarily, no matter how long the war lasts. But few if any Arab political

analysts believe Saddam will capitulate or flee.

They believe survival is his key strategy, for long enough to deny the United States a moral victory. And his ultimate ambition is to be hailed as a great Arab leader, even if he is killed in the achievement.

"Saddam Hussein is going to take that pause as a very positive sign and he is going to exploit it," said former Jordanian foreign minister Jawad Anani.

"There is no way he can win militarily. The only thing he can do, and this is what he has been planning, is to buy time. He is banking on rallying world public opinion. Over time he will benefit the more the claims of the coalition are shown not to be matched by results," he told Reuters.

"Iraq started out with low expectations, so every little gain counts," Anani added.

AS LONG AS IT TAKES

Washington is sticking to its repeated assertion that the war's outcome is not in doubt, but this is tempered now by the caveat that "it will take as long as it takes."

But the longer it takes, the more uncertain it becomes.

Abdel Monem-Said, director of Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies in Cairo, said Saddam would be able to portray any pause in the U.S. advance as an Iraqi victory.

"It will be considered a defeat (for the invading force), at least for a week, even if it doesn't change the fundamental balance of power," he said, because it will be seen as a sign the U.S. military is not invincible.

A grinding siege of Baghdad is

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## Life is boredom and fear

BBC NEWS ONLINE

(Nariman al-Masri, a Baghdad resident, wife and mother of two girls, talks about life in the Iraqi capital.)

Up to now, we have not been touched physically by the war. To look at, the inside of my home is pretty much normal.

Of course we can't go out at all now, for any reason. We're now locked up in our homes after the heavy bombing of the last day-and-a-half.

When the bombing starts I put headphones on my four-year-old daughter and play her children's songs to drown the explosions out.

Until Thursday night I spent a lot of time on the phone to friends and family, but now the phones are dead so we're starting to feel cut off and closed in - to really feel the war.

People in the city stay at home and listen to the air raids.

We still send out a man from our building to go to the markets to shop sometimes, but that may end soon.

Air strikes have just started again, by the way. Can you hear it?

Life in general is now full of boredom or fear of what is to come.

Adults are used to it and can cope, but the kids are suffering.

I have a four-year-old daughter, Mariam. When the bombing starts I put headphones on her and play her children's songs to drown the explosions out.

She feels the raids coming in the night, wakes up and gets into our bed and cannot sleep. She is terror

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## Mongla Port Authority clarifies

The Mongla Port Authority (MPA) has said a report headlined "Port of dread, fewer ships moor at Mongla" published in The Daily Star (DS) on March 17 has drawn its attention.

The opinion of MPA regarding the news is given below:

On 12th January 2002, a report captioned, "57 pirate raids on foreign ships in last 2 months" was published in the daily whereas the total number of piracy attacks in both Chittagong and Mongla (according to Piracy Report Centre, Kuala Lumpur) was only 26. Then again a report headlined "dubious dredging deal, work in Pussur suspended for 8 months" was published on 4th May 2002 without thoroughly verifying the facts. On 26th February 2003, the DS pub

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## Dhaka rejects US plea to slash Iraqi mission

US envoy summoned to air concern over war deaths

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka turned down a US request to downsize the Iraqi embassy in Dhaka and summoned its Ambassador Mary Ann Peters to the foreign office yesterday to register concern over civilian deaths caused by the US-led invasion of Iraq.

It also appealed to the world leaders to rally all efforts for an immediate halt to the war, opining that massive relief and reconstruction efforts should start in Iraq under the UN.

Dhaka asserted its position on the war after Prime Minister Khaled Zia had a meeting with her senior cabinet colleagues on the issue and the latest developments yesterday.

Washington had earlier made an informal request to Dhaka to downsize the Iraqi embassy, citing that several countries of

the world did so.

"There was an informal request. But we formally notified that Bangladesh as a sovereign and independent nation will decide on what sort of relations it would have with whom," Moshed Khan told newsmen after the US envoy left the foreign office.

Khan said he asked the US diplomat "not to come up with these sort of requests." "We treat everybody equally," he said.

Asked whether the government has taken a firm stand against the US and its allies' position, Khan said: "This is not against or in favour of anybody. We are raising the voice of humanity."

"We are never in favour of war. The war must come to a halt immediately," he added.

"We are anguished and this (civilian deaths) is unacceptable

to us. This unwarranted killings must stop immediately," Khan said.

"We are concerned for the way the war is proceeding. If street fight starts in Baghdad it would mean loss of lives of the common and innocent people," he said.

The foreign minister observed that the Western media failed to play its neutral role in covering the war. "This is very unfortunate," he commented.

The US envoy, however, was reluctant to say anything to newsmen about her discussion with the foreign minister.

Asked whether she found any change in Bangladesh government's policy on Iraq issue, Peters said, "I don't want to comment on this."

Pressed repeatedly to make a comment on the issue, a reluctant Peters said, "I don't think so."

## Bangladesh to send food, medicine for Iraqi civilians

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh yesterday decided to dispatch food and medicine worth 2 million US dollars in emergency relief supplies for Iraqi civilians.

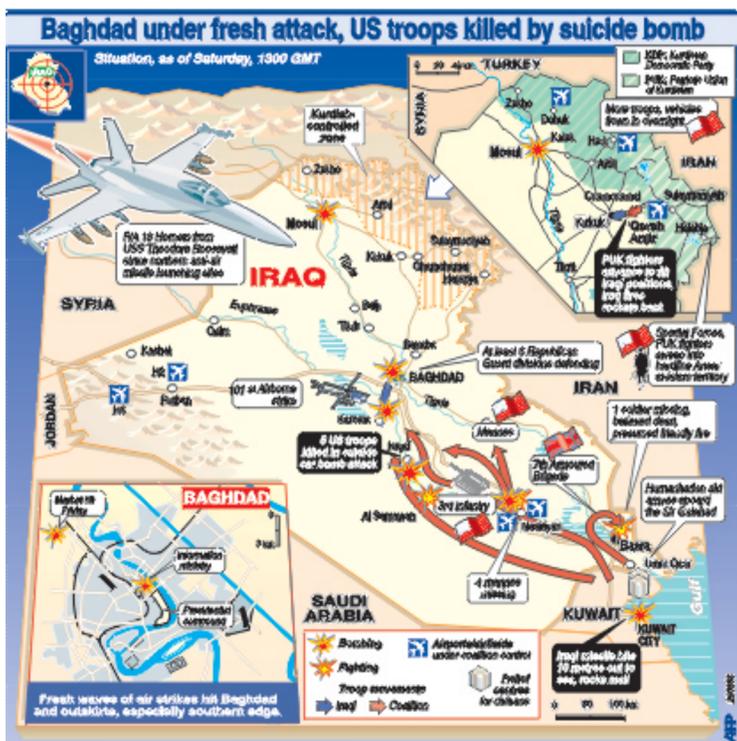
The humanitarian relief that will include medicine, tea, biscuit, saline, and drinking water will be sent through International Red Cross and Red Crescent Society or any other international agency.

An official announcement said the decision came from a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Khaled Zia reviewing global situation, including the war in the Middle East.

The Prime Minister expressed deep concern at the killing of civilians, including women and children, and destruction of non-military establishments in Iraq.

She called for immediate start of humanitarian aid and relief operation under the supervision of the United Nations to assuage the suf

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## America in the vice

Lives and careers are on the line in Iraq

THE GUARDIAN, UK

A vice is slowly beginning to close on US and British political leaders who ordered or justified the launching of war on Iraq. This potentially fatal squeeze is the product of two opposed dynamics. One is the dawning realisation that the war will not be over quickly, and will certainly not be the "cakewalk" predicted by Kenneth Adelman of the Pentagon's infamous defence policy board. The other is the prospect of an accelerating humanitarian crisis.

Several factors, notably fierce Iraqi resistance and US miscalculations about the number of ground combat forces required, have forced a slowdown in the offensive. Around Basra, indeed, and south of Baghdad, the advance has effectively been halted for several days. A tactical reassessment is now

under way against a backdrop of escalating political recriminations in Washington and increasingly, between London and the US. The top US infantry commander in Iraq, Lieutenant-General William Wallace, admits the campaign is not progressing as expected, echoing concerns expressed by retired senior generals. Whitehall defence officials are urging the sort of patient, circumspect approach adopted by British forces outside Basra. The evident fear is that any precipitate ground assault on Baghdad and a subsequent descent into street-fighting by outnumbered and poorly supplied US troops could be disastrous.

Even the hawkish US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld, principal author of the controversial

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