

US tanks, gunships pound Iraq insurgents: 18 killed

4 members of US-backed security forces killed in ambush

AP, Karbala

American tanks and AC-130 gunships pounded insurgent positions near two shrines in the center of the holy city of Karbala early yesterday, and the US military said it killed 18 fighters loyal to rebel cleric Muqtada al-Sadr.

The fighting began after insurgents fired rocket-propelled grenades at US tanks patrolling Karbala's "Old City," said US Army Col. Pete Mansoor of the 1st Armored Division.

The tanks returned fire, and more than two hours of heavy fighting followed. Smoke billowed from burning buildings. A rebel weapons cache was hit, the military said.

Much of the fighting was near the

city's Imam Hussein and Imam Abbas shrines, which US forces allege are being used by militiamen as firing positions or protective cover. Mansoor said the shrines were not damaged. Eighteen insurgents died, he said.

Dr. Abbas Falih al-Hassani of Karbala's al-Hussein hospital said 12 people died, including two Iranian pilgrims. Thirteen were wounded.

The dead included a driver for a camera crew of the Al-Jazeera television network, the station reported.

Rashid Hamid Wali, 40, died while assisting a crew from the Qatar-based network that was filming the clashes from a hotel roof shortly after midnight, said Ahmed al-Sheikh, the network's news editor in Qatar.

It was unclear who was responsible.

There was also overnight fighting between US forces and al-Sadr loyalists in another holy city, Najaf. One civilian died and another was injured when their car was caught in the crossfire, hospital officials said.

AFP adds: Four members of the US-trained Iraqi paramilitary force were killed when they were ambushed by attackers yesterday in the town of Baqubah, north of Baghdad, colleagues of the victims said.

"Four ICDC (Iraqi Civil Defence Corps) were killed and another wounded at 5:30 am local time when they were manning a road block," Abdel Karim Mahmud Hassan said.

"Six cars drove up on two sides and started to fire RPGs (rocket-propelled grenades), grenades and submachine guns," Hassan told

Separately, a bomb exploded as a US patrol drove past, wounding two Iraqi civilians, five kilometres east of Baqubah.

A US marine serving in the volatile western province of al-Anbar was killed in a road accident while out on patrol, the military said yesterday.

The incident happened Thursday while the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force was conducting "security-and-stability operations," said a statement, classifying the death as "non-hostile".

The latest casualty takes the US military death toll in Iraq to 791 since the start of the US-led invasion in March 2003. This figure includes 576 troops killed in action.

ATTACK ON ENVOY AL to stage demonstration tomorrow

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League will stage a demonstration tomorrow to protest yesterday's bomb attack on British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury in Sylhet that left two people dead and many injured.

Awami League Central Working Committee (ALCWC) that sat in an urgent meeting with Sheikh Hasina in the chair strongly condemned the dirty attack, which, it said was "not an isolated incident".

In a resolution the ALCWC alleged that under the patronage of the government, communal extremists launched bomb attacks on Mymensingh cinema halls, Hazrat Shahjalal @ shrine in Sylhet, Pagla mazar 'urs' in Tangail and in Dinajpur and Satkhira.

These identified forces, it said, killed gazar fish in the ponds of Shahjalal @ shrine and tortoises in the pond of Hazrat Bayzid Bostami @ in Chittagong recently.

The extremist elements yesterday again staged the heinous attack on the shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal @.

"The BNP-Jamaat alliance government has turned Bangladesh into a safe sanctuary of international communal extremists," the AL resolution said, adding that such heinous incidents are taking place one after another in the wake of government's inaction against the extremists.

WASHINGTON POST OBTAINS PHOTOS AND VIDEOS



A naked Iraqi detainee, top, appears to be cuffed at the ankles under the guard of a baton-wielding US soldier and a US soldier, bottom, appears poised to punch an Iraqi detainee at Abu Ghraib Prison.

PHOTO: THE WASHINGTON POST

'New images amplify abuse at Iraq prison'

REUTERS, Washington

In a collection of hundreds of so-far-unreleased photographs and short digital videos obtained by The Washington Post, US soldiers are shown physically and emotionally abusing detainees at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison, the newspaper reported yesterday.

The new pictures and videos go

beyond the photos previously shown in the media, displaying a variety of abusive techniques and US soldiers appearing to delight in abuse of detainees at the US-run prison near Baghdad, the newspaper said.

Photos and videos from Abu Ghraib were presented to Army investigators in January. The

images began surfacing publicly last month, severely damaging the US reputation in the Arab world.

The Post said one video clip showed five hooded and naked detainees standing against the wall in the darkness, each masturbating, with two other hooded detainees in the background.

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'Top Khulna outlaw killed in crossfire'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Chief of a faction of the outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-ML) in the southwestern region Abdur Rashid Shaikh alias Tapu was killed in an exchange of fire with the Joint Forces yesterday at Naniarbeel in Rupsha upazila of Khulna.

The incident occurred when PBCP (M-L) cadres attacked the Joint Forces conducting a search for illegal arms on the basis of information received from Tapu, arrested earlier. The outlaws fired more than 100 rounds at the Joint Forces, who responded with 32 shots, Superintendent of Police (SP) Habibur Rahman said.

Tapu was arrested by Khulna district police from Ibrahimpur in Mirpur of Dhaka on Thursday and brought to Khulna.

Sources said the dreaded outlaw was hiding in the capital for the last two months with the backing of a BNP central leader and one of the six MPs from Khulna district.

The SP said Tapu was chargesheeted in 12 murder cases

and accused of 19 other criminal charges. He was involved in five double murders, including the killing of two policemen, and in the murders of Rupsha upazila Awami League general secretary Sarder Harun-ar-Rashid and Naihati Union Parishad chairman Golam Faruque. He was given life term in the Harun murder case.

Tapu was evading arrest since 1993 thanks to his links with leaders of successive ruling parties. He had created a reign of terror in Rupsha, Terokhada and Dighalia upazilas where he committed 12 murders for refusing to pay toll and also for opposing his criminal activities, police said.

He was in possession of huge arms and ammunition and led a gang of over 2,000, who included around 100 professional killers. The gang members move about as rickshawpullers, fish sellers, vegetable vendors and day labourers, police and intelligence sources said.

Tapu became chief of the PBCP (ML) in 2001. The other faction, PBCP (Janajuddha) is led by Abdur Rashid Malitha alias Tapan.

Road accident kills seven in Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Seven people were killed and 15 others injured, three of them seriously, in a road accident on the Kushtia-Rajbari Highway on Thursday night.

The dead are Fazal Karim, 34, of village Biljani, Khonji Chandra Sarkar, 27, of village Simulia, Ziku Mollah, 26, of village Paikpara, Ishahaq, 26, of village Shingria in Khoksa upazila of Kushtia district and Faruq Hossain, 28, and Rezaul, 27, of village Batikamara and Sobhan, 40, of village Sadaki in Kumarkhali upazila of the district.

All the seven were day labourers. They were returning to their villages in Kushtia from Dhaka on board a truck.

Police said the accident occurred at around 9:00pm when the Kushtia bound truck fell into a roadside ditch after colliding with a Dhaka bound

truck from Kushtia at village Achra in sadar upazila of Rajbari district.

On information, police rushed to the spot, recovered the bodies with the help of villagers and sent them to Rajbari Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

Six of the injured are undergoing treatment at the sadar hospital. They are Nabir Uddin, Liaqat Ali, Hassan, Asad, Karim, Arshad, Rafiqul. Of them, condition of Nabir, Hassan and Karim are stated to be critical.

Police could not seize the Dhaka bound truck as it fled the scene soon after the accident. A case was lodged with Rajbari police.

Our Noakhali Correspondent reported that Chatkhil upazila BNP General Secretary Tofazzal Hossain was killed in a road accident in Madna Kaluai in Begumganj yesterday afternoon.

Hotel manager stabbed to death in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A hotel manager was stabbed to death by a gang of miscreants in the city yesterday.

The victim was identified as Nasiruddin, 25, son of Abdul Barek of Daudkandi in Comilla.

Police and witnesses said a gang of eight entered 'Mamota Hotel and Restaurant' at Purba (east) Madarbari under Double Mooring Police Station at about 3:30pm and demanded money from manager Nasiruddin.

As he refused to give in to their demand, the miscreants stabbed him in different parts of the body, looted Tk 30 thousand from cash box and fled the scene.

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THREE PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Internal feuds blamed for not holding VC-panel elections

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

Vice-chancellor (VC)-panel elections under the University Ordinance, 1973 have not been held for long at three of the four public universities allegedly due to internal feuds of the authorities.

Dhaka University (DU), Chittagong University (CU), Rajshahi University (RU) and Jahangirnagar University (JU) follow the ordinance.

The JU authorities held VC-panel election on February 18 in the wake of demands from the JU Teachers Association. Prof Mustahidur Rahman, who bagged the highest votes, was appointed

VC.

The 1973 ordinance and related regulations provide that the vice-chancellor or the chairman of the senate meeting shall call upon the members present to elect three persons for the chancellor to appoint a vice-chancellor. Generally, the chancellor appoints the panel member who gets the highest number of votes.

Sources said VC-panel elections at the RU and the CU are not being held due to political squabbles between pro-BNP and pro-Jamaat teachers and between the VC and Pro-VC. "Political distance" between VC Faisal Islam Faruki and Pro-VC KAM Shahadat Hossain

Mondol is the main reason behind non-holding of VC-panel election, they felt.

Election of VC panel at the CU has not been held since 1988 as the senate remains inactive since 1985 mainly due to political tangles, sources said.

VC AJM Nuruddin Chowdhury and Pro-VC M Shamsuddin reportedly have had 'political' feuds between them.

The university's registered graduate election also has not taken place since 1987. The CU Teachers Association recently asked the VC

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Prayer Timing		
May 22		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-05	4-40
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-40	6-45
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation



PHOTO: STAR

Renovations to Kushtia Municipality Tagore Museum are yet to begin after work on the project stalled four years ago because of fund crisis.

Fund crisis halts work on Tagore museum

AMANUR AMAN, Kushtia

Work on the proposed "Kushtia Municipality Tagore Museum" at the Tagore Lodge that stopped due to fund crisis soon after it started about a year and a half ago is yet to resume.

Sources said steps to preserve the lodge situated in the district town, built by the family of Rabinranath Tagore, were initiated by Kushtia municipality about four years ago.

The municipality took up a Tk 5 lakh-project on January 26, 2002 to reconstruct the lodge as a museum that would also house a library. It started the work following a pledge to preserve the house made by the then state minister for youth and cultural affairs of the Awami League government Obaidul Kader in 2001. The municipal authorities then purchased the house from one

Salima Khatun, who inherited it from late Abdul Gafur. Gafur had bought it when put on auction many years ago. Since then it was being used as personal property. Visitors no longer gathered there and no function was held there. The once Tagore family house was thus drifting into oblivion.

The authorities then floated a tender to rebuild the lodge and work started on November 9, 2003 only to stop soon due to fund crisis.

"The municipality got no financial assistance from the government to implement the project," a senior official said.

The Tagore family had built the house on a piece of land it owned and named it Tagore Lodge. The house is situated by the road to the great poet's Kuthbari at Selidah.

Rabinranath's elder brothers Bolu Tagore and Surendranath

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