

Fighting surges in Iraq

2 US troops killed

AP, Baghdad

Heavy fighting surged Friday in the Euphrates River city of Ramadi, police and hospital officials said, and the US military reported the deaths of two more soldiers around the militant stronghold, scene of nearly one-quarter of 29 American deaths this month.

On Saturday morning, a suicide car bomber driving at high speed exploded his vehicle near an Iraqi army checkpoint in downtown Baghdad, killing three soldiers and an Iraqi civilian, police said.

The attack also wounded three Iraqi soldiers and two civilians, said police Capt. Abdel-Hussein Minsif.

A suicide bomber on a public minibus set off an explosives belt on Friday as the vehicle approached a busy terminal in Baghdad on Friday, killing at least five people and wounding eight, police said. Elsewhere in the capital, a roadside bomb killed a US Army soldier whose convoy was patrolling southeastern Baghdad Friday night, raising to at least 1,913 the number of US service members who have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003.

Gunmen also killed a member of the commission charged with

ensuring former members of Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime are banned from the Iraqi government, police said. Thirteen commission members have been killed since it was created two years ago.

The US military declined to say if it was conducting a large offensive against Ramadi, but police and residents have reported heavy fighting there during the past week. Seven service members have died in or near the city since Sept. 1.

"There are 30 to 40 battalion-level operations going on across Iraq on any given day," said Lt. Col. Steven A. Boylan, a US military spokesman in Baghdad. "What you are seeing is the pattern of operations that we have been conducting almost every day here."

The latest US military deaths there occurred Thursday when two soldiers were killed, one by a roadside bombing between Ramadi and Fallujah, the other in a gun battle in Ramadi, 110 km west of Baghdad.

Ramadi police Capt. Nasir Al-Aousi said American forces airlifted equipment into the city stadium before dawn Friday. He said clashes erupted in that area and spread to an industrial zone after sunrise, continuing until at least midday.

New Orleans' levee strained further

More areas likely to go under water as rains drench devastated city

AP, New Orleans

Sheets of rain from Hurricane Rita drenched parts of New Orleans yesterday, straining an already damaged levee system and threatening to spread flooding throughout the devastated but largely abandoned city.

The rain was periodic but heavy, coming down in waves that lasted a few minutes before letting up. The National Weather Service said New Orleans was expected to get bands of rain dropping 3 to 4 inches per hour.

The rain threatened to increase flooding after parts of the city were submerged again Friday as hurricane-driven storm surges topped one levee, and another levee began to leak.

Floodwaters inundated the city's Ninth Ward, which was slammed by Hurricane Katrina last month and has been all but empty ever since. The water covered piles of rubble and mud-caked cars, rising swiftly to the top of first-floor windows.

"It's like looking at a murder," Quentrell Jefferson of the Ninth Ward said Friday as he watched news of the flooding at a church in

Lafayette, 125 miles west of New Orleans. "The first time is bad. After that, you numb up."

It was unclear Saturday whether flooding had worsened, but Army Corps of Engineers Capt. Steve Keen said workers monitoring the levees found no new leaks overnight.

Rita made landfall early Saturday as a Category 3 storm just east of Sabine Pass, on the Texas-Louisiana line, more than 275 miles from New Orleans. Despite the flooding in New Orleans, meteorologists said the gravest concern was in southwestern Louisiana communities, particularly the port city of Lake Charles.

"I know we're all concerned about New Orleans, but I'm more focused on these other communities right now," said Max Mayfield, director of the National Hurricane Centre in Miami. "That's where people are going to die."

Lake Charles was a virtual ghost town, its residents among up to 500,000 people in southwestern Louisiana who headed north. The hurricane centre had no information about conditions in Lake Charles at landfall.

"Those sensors went down" hours earlier, meteorologist Dave Roberts said.

In New Orleans, water poured through gaps in the Industrial Canal levee, which engineers had tried to repair after Katrina's floodwaters left 80 percent of the city under water. The rushing water spilled east into St. Bernard Parish, where ducks swam down Judge Perez Drive.

Friday's storm surge was both stronger and earlier than expected, apparently coming through waterways southeast of the city, said Col. Richard Wagenaar, the Army Corps of Engineers' district chief in New Orleans. Water poured over piles of gravel and sandbags in the damaged Industrial Canal levee despite efforts to build it up.

"We believed the 8-foot elevation was sufficient" to protect the Ninth Ward, Wagenaar said.

Farther north, water 6 to 8 inches deep was streaming into homes south of Lake Pontchartrain, spouting from beneath two gravel-and-rock patches on the London Avenue Canal levee. Corps engineers said they expected the leaks.

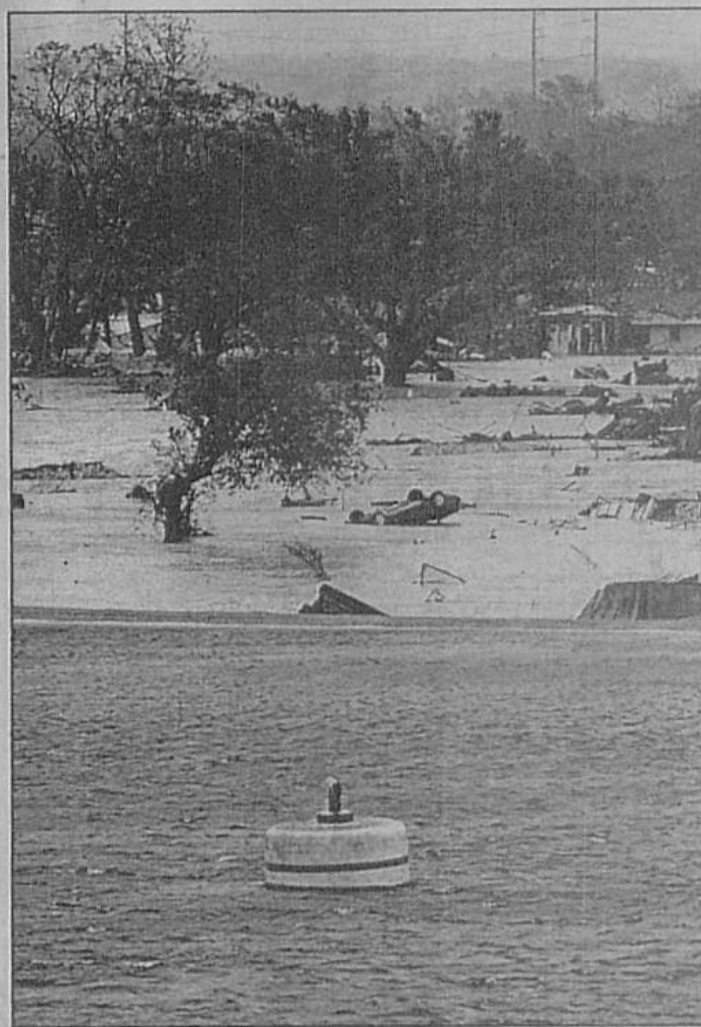


PHOTO: AFP

Floodwaters from Hurricane Rita run into the Ninth Ward District of New Orleans after overtopping a repaired breach in the levee of the Inner Harbor Canal (also called the Industrial Canal) Friday. The Ninth Ward was already devastated by flood from Hurricane Katrina.

Bush watches Rita batter Texas and Louisiana

AFP, Colorado Springs

President George W. Bush, eager to polish his tarnished image as a strong leader in times of crisis, watched Hurricane Rita pound the US coast yesterday from a military base high in the Rocky Mountains.

Stung by the widespread belief he was slow and ineffective in response to killer Hurricane Katrina, Bush took in a military briefing on Rita here before travelling to his adoptive home state of Texas to visit emergency officials.

The president listened as officers detailed flooding and rainfall predictions as well as forecasts of Rita's trajectory and military response efforts. He made no public remarks.

Bush was at the Colorado Springs headquarters of the Pentagon's Northern Command, which was created after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks to guard the US territory.

The president was to travel to Texas to pay a visit to a state emergency operations centre in Austin and then head to San Antonio where he was to spend the night. The White House refused to say when he would return to Washington.

Bush, criticized after Katrina for not being quicker to cut short his August vacation on his Texas ranch, was not expected to stop at the property, which lies some 300 miles (480 km) from the stretch of Texas-Louisiana coastline where Rita made landfall.



PHOTO: AFP

A protester holds a placard saying "No War On Iraq" during a peace demonstration in central Tokyo yesterday. About 150 protesters held a demonstration demanding immediate withdrawal of Japan's forces from Iraq.

India advises Iran to avoid 'confrontation'

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

As the European Union tabled a motion to refer Iran's nuclear programme to the UN Security Council, Indian Prime Minister on Friday has advised Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to adopt a "flexible position" to avoid confrontation with European Union and the United States on the issue.

During a telephonic conversation with Ahmadinejad who rang up Singh, the Indian prime minister stressed the importance of making "concessions" to help resolve the stand-off between Iran on one hand and the EU and the United States on the other.

Singh's advice was given when the Iranian President raised the issue of his country's nuclear programme in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), a statement issued by External Affairs Ministry late Friday night said.

Ahmadinejad's talks with Singh are very significant as India is one of the 35 members of the IAEA board, which would decide whether to refer Iran's resumption of its nuclear

programme to the United Nations Security Council for possible punitive measures, including economic sanctions.

This was the first summit-level contact between India and Iran since the change of guard in Tehran after recent elections in Iran.

Russia and China are opposing referral of Iran's nuclear programme to the UNSC saying it would be counter-productive.

The US wants India to support its stand on Iran but New Delhi maintains that Tehran should honour its commitment it has made as a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. India also favours resolution of the issue through discussions and diplomacy should be given a chance.

Foreign Ministers of India, Russia and China had met in New York last Wednesday and favoured a consensual approach to end the stand-off between Iran and EU and the US.

The Iranian nuclear programme had come up for discussion when Manmohan Singh had met US President George W. Bush on September 13 on the sidelines of UN General Assembly session in New York.

2 killed as Taliban storm prison

AFP, AP, Khost

An insurgent and a prisoner were killed early Saturday after suspected Taliban insurgents stormed a prison and police headquarters in south-eastern Khost province, officials said.

Suspected Taliban insurgents attacked the district headquarters of Ali-Sher with guns and rocket-propelled grenades, blew up a weapons stock and killed a detainee in police custody.

"In last night's exchange of fire one detainee in police custody died in the Taliban attack and two soldiers were wounded," Nageebullah Asmat, the deputy intelligence director told AFP.

The authorities could not ask for support because the district had lost all communication links with the provincial capital, Asmat said.

Provincial police chief Mohammed Ayoub said that police had also killed a rebel overnight in Ali-Sher district.

Khost is an insurgency-hit province which shares a long porous border with neighboring Pakistan. Afghan officials have accused militants of crossing over from Pakistan to launch attacks in Afghanistan, a charge Pakistan denies.

'US troops still routinely abuse Iraqi prisoners'

AFP, Washington

Troops from the army's elite 82nd Airborne Division routinely beat and mistreated Iraqi prisoners at a base near Fallujah in central Iraq with the approval of their superior officers, a New York-based human rights group said Friday.

Human Rights Watch said three soldiers -- two sergeants and a captain who were not identified by name -- provided the accounts of abuse, which they said occurred at Forward Operating Base Mercury near Fallujah from September 2003 through April 2004.

They alleged that a sergeant broke one prisoner's leg with a metal baseball bat. Others were made to hold five-gallon (19-liter) jugs of water with their arms outstretched, according to the report.

Detainees, known as PUCs or "persons under control," were subjected to stress positions, extremes of hot and cold, sleep deprivation, denied food and water

and were piled in human pyramids, the report said.

The abuse was meted out as part of military intelligence interrogations or merely to "relieve stress" of troops, the report said.

"Everyone in camp knew if you wanted to work out your frustration you show up at the PUC tent. In a way it was sport," a sergeant is quoted as saying.

"One day (a sergeant) shows up and tells a PUC to grab a pole. He told him to bend over and broke the guy's leg with a mini Louisville Slugger, a metal bat," he said.

The soldiers were from the 82nd Airborne Division's 1st Battalion 504th parachute regiment.

"The accounts here suggest that the mistreatment of prisoners by the US military is even more widespread than has been acknowledged to date, including among troops belonging to some of the best trained, most decorated and highly respected units in the US Army," the report said.

Sight Savers International, an International Eye Care Agency, working for prevention of avoidable blindness as well as education and rehabilitation of visually impaired people in Bangladesh is seeking application from qualified and experienced persons to fill up the position.

Along with other international and national partners it aims at eliminating blindness due to childhood cataract from Bangladesh through a campaign. This is four and a half year project ending in December 2008.

JOB OPPORTUNITY

Project Manager (1 Position)

The Project Manager (PM) will take management responsibilities under the supervision of the Programme Coordinator. The PM is also expected to be engaged in enhancing capacity of the partners in programme management and will also be responsible in maintaining programme results, networking with NGOs/GOB and other stakeholders.

Competencies:

A successful candidate must possess most of the following competencies and personal qualities: (a) Masters in any discipline of social science or public health; (b) working experience for at least five years (preferably longer) in health sector in any reputed NGO, or Donor Agency; (c) extensive experiences in project/programme management including monitoring and evaluation (d) substantive conceptual/analytical skills (d) strong inter-personal/negotiating skills; (e) strong networking, report writing and communication skills; and (f) computing skills using microsoft office.

The position requires extensive travel and work with partners across the country. Candidate should be sensitive to diversity and willing to work in a team. Remuneration for the position would be more than 50,000 plus other admissible benefits. Candidates who applied for the position earlier need not to apply.

Females are especially encouraged to apply.

Interested candidates are requested to submit their detailed bio-data along with cover letter and a recent passport size photograph to The Daily Star, Box No. A-228, 19, Karwan Bazar, Dhaka 1215, no later than 7th October 2005.

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Arabs view Bush as greater threat than Laden

AFP, Washington

A panel reporting to the US State Department has warned that President George W. Bush is seen in some Arab nations as a greater threat than al-Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden, a US newspaper reported yesterday.

The report by the congressionally mandated advisory panel, which found that "America's image and reputation abroad could hardly be worse", has been seen by senior officials but not yet released publicly. The Washington Post said.

A fact-finding mission to the Middle East last year found that "there is deep and abiding anger toward US policies and actions," according to The Post.

The Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy cited polls that found that large majorities in Egypt,

Morocco and Saudi Arabia "view George W. Bush as a greater threat to the world order than Osama bin Laden."

Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy Karen Hughes, a longtime presidential adviser, prepares to leave this weekend on a "listening tour" of the Middle East.

The panel's report warns that televised images of US policy choices -- such as in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the invasion of Iraq -- reverberate across the Arab media and will "long haunt the image of the United States," the papers said.

The committee recommended a series of steps, including increased funding and staffing, to rebuild efforts to promote US culture and ideas -- an essential task that it said has been eroded through bureaucratic shuffling and indifference.

Foreign militants may join Thai insurgency

AP, Jakarta

A veteran leader of Thailand's insurgency has issued a warning: militants from Indonesia and Arab nations might join the fight for a separate homeland if the Thai government continues a crackdown that's provoking a new generation of Muslim fighters.

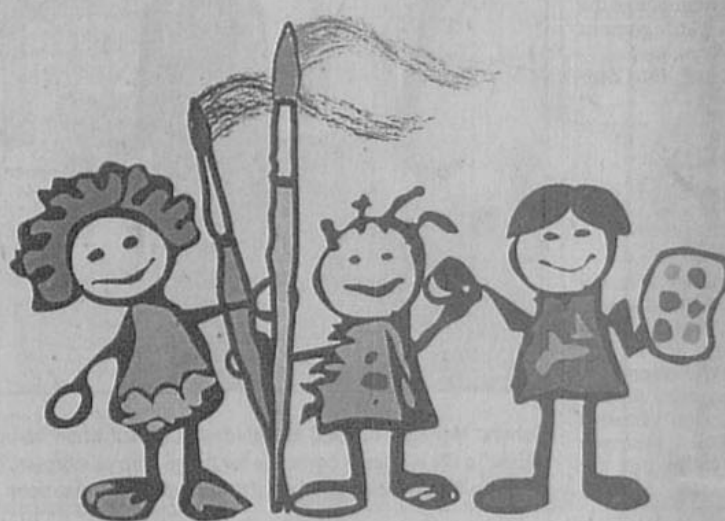
In his first interview with a news organization, Lukman B. Lima told The Associated Press that violence could spread from Thailand's southern provinces to the capital unless the government accepts an offer to negotiate an end to the conflict.

Although he suggested peace talks, Lukman lashed out at the government

of Thaksin Shinawatra, likening the prime minister to Stalin and Hitler.

"If the government opts to kill and kill without reason, perhaps fighters from Indonesia and Arab countries will help us because, according to Islam, real Muslims cannot just stand by when their brother Muslims are being slain," he said.

The 21-month-old insurgency in which more than 1,000 Muslims and Buddhists have been killed is getting moral and financial support from abroad, especially from Islamic sympathizers in Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, according to Lukman. But weapons have been obtained locally and wielded by Thai Muslims, he said.



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- The participants can use any subject and medium for the paintings
- The size of the painting should be minimum 11" x 16" and maximum 16" x 22"
- Only paintings which were composed during the year 2005, will be eligible for entry in the competition
- Write the applicant's name, father's name, mother's name, date of birth, phone no., school and address at the back of the painting attested by the Head of the Educational Institution
- One participant can send maximum 2 paintings
- A color passport size photograph of the participant should be attached with the entry
- No entry fee is required for the competition and no paintings will be returned to the participants
- All the received paintings will be considered the property of Gandaria Kisholaya Kanchi-Kanchi Mela
- Paintings should not be folded, mounted or framed
- Last date of entry: For Bangladeshi participants- 15 December '05, For Foreign participants- 15 December '05
- All entries should be sent fully pre-paid, adequately stamped and mailed
- For details please visit: www.gp-zainul-qamrul.com

Paintings to be sent to following address:

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