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## Iraqi Police accuse Britons of planting bombs

By: Jonathan Finan and Omar Fekeiki on: 19.09.2005 [18:02 ] (663 reads)

(8861 bytes)



### British Soldiers Clash With Iraqi Police in Basra

Governor's House Attacked by Shiite Militiamen

By Jonathan Finan and Omar Fekeiki

Washington Post Foreign Service

Monday, September 19, 2005; 1:27 PM

BASRA, Iraq, Sept. 19 — Heavy clashes erupted Monday between Iraqi police and British soldiers based in Basra, Iraq's second-largest city, witnesses said.

The clashes are the latest in surging tensions in Basra, a Shiite-dominated city that had long been one of Iraq's calmest. Attacks have targeted Britons and Americans there.

Monday's clashes stemmed from the arrest by Iraqi police on Sunday of two Britons, whom Iraqi police accused of planting bombs.

A Western military spokesman in Basra confirmed "an ongoing disturbance" in the city on Monday but said Iraqi and British forces were working together to quell it.

"There is public disorder going on," the official said. "We are aware that Iraqi authorities are holding U.K. service personnel, and we are liaising with Iraqi authorities on the matter."

Witnesses said the clashes developed amid British attempts to win the release of the two Britons. Fighting in the city continued into Monday evening, and witnesses saw a British armored vehicle in flames after it was allegedly set on fire by Iraqi police. Earlier, gunmen loyal to a radical Shiite Muslim cleric attacked the house of Basra's governor to press demands for the release of two prominent members of the cleric's militia who were arrested Sunday by British forces.

The house of Mohammed Musabah, a 43-year-old technocrat who runs Basra, came under attack early Monday from rocket-propelled grenades and mortar rounds. There were no reports of injuries.

Musabah, a former businessman who took office in Basra in March, blamed the attack on the militia of Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr, whose movement is a rival to the Shiite political party that now holds political power in Basra.

In a separate development in Basra, an Iraqi working as a local reporter in Basra for the New York Times was found dead Monday after being kidnapped by masked men, sources close to his family said. Fakher Haider was found with his hands bound and a single gunshot wound to the head hours after having been seized at his home by four men who took him away in handcuffs, telling the family they wanted to interrogate him. The masked men did not identify themselves as police, the sources said.

The killing came a month after an American freelance journalist, Steven Vincent, was kidnapped and killed in Basra. He was working on a book about the city and had written an opinion piece for the New York Times in which he criticized Basra's security forces.

In the port city of 1.5 million people on the banks of the Shatt al Arab river,

residents say the local police force of 13,600 has become as much an instrument of fear as security, Washington Post correspondent Anthony Shadid reported last month. Musabah, the governor of Basra, acknowledged in an interview that the police were infiltrated by religious parties. His police chief, Hassan Sawadi, told the British newspaper the Guardian that he had lost control over three-quarters of his police force and that militiamen inside its ranks were using their posts to assassinate opponents. Soon after, Musabah said, the Interior Ministry ordered Sawadi not to speak again publicly.

Since May, more than 65 assassinations have been carried out in Basra, political leaders estimated. Among the victims were a lieutenant colonel in the Defense Ministry, a Baath Party-era police officer, a merchant with ties to Hussein's government, two university professors and a municipal official who had tried to combat corruption.

In continuing violence elsewhere in Iraq Monday, a car bomb exploded amid Shiite pilgrims marching and driving to the holy city of Karbala, killing five and wounding 12, said Capt. Muthanna Ahmed, a spokesman for Babil province police. Iraq's Shiites head to the holy city at this time in an annual ritual to mark the birthday of the Imam Mahdi.

The car bombing occurred in Latifiya, an insurgent stronghold 25 miles south of Baghdad, and was followed 10 minutes later by mortar shells that wounded four more people, Ahmed said. One of those killed and four of the wounded belonged to the Mahdi Army, the Shiite militia led by Sadr, said Sahib Amiri, one of Sadr's aides in Najaf.

Abu Musab Zarqawi, a Jordanian insurgent who leads the group, al Qaeda in Iraq, declared what he called an all-out war against Shiites in Iraq after U.S. and Iraqi security forces launched a military operation early this month in the northwestern city of Tall Afar near the Syrian border. Since then, dozens of Shiites have been killed in car bombs, assassinations and roadside bombings.

Iraq's prime minister, Ibrahim Jafari, a Shiite, said the recent insurgent attacks on Shiites were aimed at provoking sectarian strife in response to the Tall Afar operation, in which U.S. and Iraqi forces said they have killed or arrested dozens of insurgents.

In Baghdad, authorities announced that a nephew of former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein was sentenced to life in prison for financing the insurgency and for possessing and manufacturing roadside bombs. The nephew, Ayman Sabawi, faces a second trial on other charges, the government said.

"The Central Criminal Court issued an initial sentence for life imprisonment against terrorist Ayman Sabawi," a government statement said. Sabawi is the son of Hussein's half brother, Sabawi Ibrahim Hassan, a former adviser to Hussein.

Hussein is scheduled to go on trial in October on charges of ordering the mass killing of Shiite villagers.

In other violence, a suicide car bomber killed 14 Iraqi soldiers Sunday night in an attack on a joint U.S.-Iraqi patrol near the town of Taji, 12 miles north of Baghdad, the Associated Press reported.

Another suicide bomber killed five Iraqi policemen and two civilians Monday when he blew himself up near an Iraqi police commando patrol in Mahmudiya, 20 miles south of Baghdad, AP reported. The attack wounded 13 officers and bystanders.

In northern Iraq, the U.S. military reported that coalition forces raided two insurgent hideouts in Mosul early Monday, "killing two terrorists and detaining three others." A military statement said the two were killed after they opened fire on the coalition forces with small arms. It said the insurgents were suspected of being connected to Zarqawi's group.

In Basra, the British army said Sunday that it had arrested two prominent followers of Sadr, whose militia members quickly took to the streets with weapons to demand the release of the men.

Sheik Ahmed Majid Fartusi and Sayyid Sajjad were detained in an early morning raid and are accused of being involved in attacks that killed at least nine soldiers, according to a statement from coalition forces.

The statement described the two men as leaders of Sadr's Mahdi Army, which clashed with U.S. forces in Baghdad and the southern city of Najaf last year. Another man was also arrested in the raid Sunday but was not identified.

"I am well aware that the people that we have arrested are prominent individuals in Basra," said Brig. John Lorrimer, commander of the British army's 12th Mechanized Brigade. "But let me make it absolutely clear: We have acted against them as individuals, not as members of any particular organization."

After the arrests in Basra, dozens of Mahdi Army members with assault rifles marched to the provincial governor's office in protest.

The Mahdi Army has remained largely out of the spotlight since last year's uprising against U.S. forces, as the cleric publicly eschewed armed confrontation in favor of the political process, while maintaining his anti-American rhetoric.

But after demonstrators burned Sadr's office in Najaf last month, Mahdi Army members occupied large parts of several southern cities, including Basra, and attacked the offices of a rival Shiite militia, the Badr Organization.

The initial version of the military's statement sent to reporters referred to the Mahdi Army as a "terror organization." A revised version sent about an hour later deleted that reference.

Mustafa Yaqoubi, a senior member of Sadr's organization, condemned the arrest of the two men. He said they "have not been active, especially after the closure of the Sadr office in Basra six months ago."

U.S. forces reportedly had detained Farttusi for two days in April 2003, touching off demonstrations in Baghdad.

Fekeiki reported from Baghdad. Special correspondents Salih Saif Aldin in Tikrit, Saad Sarhan in Najaf and Bassam Sebti and Naseer Nouri in Baghdad contributed to this report.

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5 comments

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### interesting

by ohm on 19.09.2005 [18:48 ]

The illusion of Zarquawi and his Sunni campaign to exterminate all SHIA becomes harder to propagate in Iraq especially when Brit soldiers posing as terrorist are taken into custody. even if the allegations are unfounded, the charge itself testifies to the thinking of Shia elements in IRAQ.

### These two Britons....

by onlyhuman on 19.09.2005 [19:06 ]

killing friends and foes,,,,,really a good carrier they have there.

I say crucify and parade them around Basra.

And as usual later, spies and traitors should be shot.....btw are these sobs belongs to any of the two category?

### LOL "An ongoing disturbance" say the Brits

by \_merk\_ on 19.09.2005 [19:33 ]

after they're caught in a false flag op. Always masters of understatement! No matter, this is an explosive piece of news and the best possible indirect recruitment for the IR. Word of Brits arrested for attacking Iraqi police must have spread like wildfire thorough Iraq's police forces and military. They caught them in Arab uniforms, how much better can it get. I'm sure many, many Iraqis have hoped for something like this to happen. Rumors of USUK conducting false flag ops have been around for so long, and now they have two brits in "drag" to prove it. It's a good day.

**in short, they are Zarquawi, aren't they?**

by KamikazeToyota on 19.09.2005 [19:33 ]

see images here [http://iraqwar.mirror-world.ru/tiki-read\\_article.php?articleId=63763&page=2](http://iraqwar.mirror-world.ru/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=63763&page=2)

**Dear KamikazeToyota, please, don't post so many images in comments. It slows down the site. Fyva**

**@Kamikazi Toyota**

by marxoid on 19.09.2005 [20:03 ]

Superb. Are these from the Turkish site? I can't get to it.

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