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Tanks crash into Basra jail to free troops (added)

By: Various on: 19.09.2005 [20:06] (783 reads)



(16105 bytes)



British forces using tanks broke down the walls of the central jail in the southern city of Basra tonight and freed two Britons – allegedly undercover commandos – who had been arrested on charges of shooting two Iraqi policemen.

Witnesses said about 150 Iraqi prisoners fled the jail as well.

Violence flared earlier in the day as demonstrators hurled stones and Molotov cocktails at British tanks and at least four people were killed in the major outbreak of violence.

The fighting erupted after British armour encircled the jail where the two Britons were being held.

During the melee one soldier could be seen scrambling for his life from a burning tank and a rock-throwing mob.

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British Soldiers Free Two From Basra Jail

By ABBAS FAYADH
 Associated Press Writer

BASRA, Iraq — In a major show of force, British soldiers used tanks to break down the walls of the central jail in this southern city late Monday and freed two Britons, allegedly undercover commandos, who had been arrested on charges of shooting two Iraqi policemen.

About 150 Iraqi prisoners also fled as British commandos stormed inside and

rescued their comrades, said Aquil Jabbar, an Iraqi television cameraman who lives across the street from the jail. Earlier Monday, demonstrators hurled stones and Molotov cocktails at British tanks, and at least four people were killed.

The fighting in the oil city of Basra, 340 miles south of the capital, erupted after British armor encircled the jail where the two Britons were being held. During the melee one British soldier could be seen in a photograph scrambling for his life from a burning tank and the rock-throwing mob.

Arab satellite television stations showed pictures of two Western men sitting on the floor of the jail building with their hands tied behind their backs.

One of the men had a bandage covering most of the top of his head, the other had blood on his clothes. Television commentary identified them only as Britons.

British military officials had declined to comment on reports the two arrested men were soldiers operating undercover, but the Ministry of Defense in London told Britain's Press Association that "two military personnel were detained by Iraqi authorities earlier today."

British forces in Iraq are based in Basra and responsible for the city's security.

To the north, an estimated 3 million pilgrims - some carrying signs reading "We welcome martyrdom" - jammed the holy city of Karbala for a major Shiite festival Monday in defiance of insurgent declarations of all-out sectarian war.

And an Iraqi court in Baghdad sentenced one of Saddam Hussein's nephews to life in prison for funding the country's violent insurgency and bomb-making after a previously unannounced trial. It was the first known trial of any of the former leader's family.

Elsewhere Monday, militants continued bloody attacks, killing 24 police and civilians and wounding 28 others.

But there were no attacks in Karbala, where security was so tight that authorities had banned vehicles from entering for several days before the holiday. Pilgrims were forced to pass through seven checkpoints inside the city before reaching holy shrines. About 6,000 policemen and Iraqi army troops were deployed in and near Karbala, and two leading Shiite militias provided additional security around the shrines of Imam Hussein and Imam Abbas.

As the festival continued, al-Qaida in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi purportedly issued a new vow, promising he would not attack followers of radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr and other Shiite leaders opposed to Iraq's U.S.-backed government.

Last Wednesday, after insurgent forces were routed from their stronghold in the northern city of Tal Afar, al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian-born Sunni Arab, declared all-out war on Iraq's majority Shiites.

In an Internet statement which appeared Monday night on a Web site known for carrying extremist Islamist material, al-Zarqawi now appeared set on trying to split the Shiite community.

"Any Shiite group that condemns the government's crimes against the Sunnis in Tal Afar, and which doesn't provide help to the occupation by any means, will be exempted from the attacks of the mujahedeen," said the statement, which could not be immediately authenticated.

The statement singled out three radical Shiite clerics and their followers who were exempted from the declaration of war: al-Sadr and Baghdad-based anti-U.S. religious leaders Jawad al-Khalisi and Ahmed al-Hassani al-Baghdadi.

The Karbala festival marked the 868 A.D. birth of Imam Mohammed al-Mahdi, whose unexplained disappearance in the 9th century has led Shiites to believe he will reappear on doomsday to lead believers to a just Islamic state.

Stomping on pictures of al-Zarqawi that were thrown onto the streets of Karbala, many pilgrims chanted praise for their own religious leaders while others rejected the al-Qaida threat.

"Even if there were a million al-Zarqawis, we would come to visit the Imam

Hussein (shrine)," a Shiite holy place named for the grandson of the prophet Muhammed.

Police said they seized weapons caches near the city, and arrested three "non-Iraqi Arabs" and a man armed with several hand grenades as he walked in the procession of pilgrims.

Authorities were keen to avoid a repeat of past tragedies during mass religious gatherings in Karbala and other holy places where suicide bombers have mounted coordinated attacks that left hundreds dead.

On Aug. 21, nearly 1,000 pilgrims were killed in a stampede on a Baghdad bridge that began when rumors spread through the crowd that a suicide bomber was among the faithful.

[link](#)

UK soldiers freed from Basra jail

British soldiers had to jump from their burning tank

Clashes in Basra

UK forces used tanks to break down the walls of a jail where two British soldiers were being held in the Iraqi city of Basra, according to reports.

The soldiers' arrests had sparked clashes in the city in which British tanks came under attack and two civilians were reportedly killed.

Basra's governor said the demolition was a "barbaric act of aggression".

British officials said the men were back in UK forces' custody but would not say how this had happened.

Civilians 'killed'

The BBC's Richard Galpin said it seemed more and more as if British forces had stormed the prison.

Witnesses told the Associated Press that around 150 prisoners escaped at the same time.

Earlier, two British tanks, sent to the police station where the soldiers are being held, were set alight in clashes.

Crowds of angry protesters hurled petrol bombs and stones injuring three servicemen and several civilians.

TV pictures showed soldiers in combat gear, clambering from one of the flaming tanks and making their escape.

British officials would not say if the two men were working under cover

A local council spokesman said two civilians were killed in the earlier clashes. Up to 15 civilians were also reported injured in the demonstrations.

Tensions have been running high in the city since the arrest of a senior figure in the Shia Mehdi Army by UK troops.

[link](#)

Iraq: British prison attack 'barbaric act of aggression' says governor

yahoo/AP: In a dramatic show of force, British soldiers used tanks to break down the walls of the central jail in this southern city Monday and freed two Britons, allegedly undercover commandos arrested on charges of shooting two Iraqi policemen. The Basra governor called the rescue a "barbaric" act of aggression.

About 150 Iraqi prisoners also fled as British commandos stormed inside and rescued their comrades, said Aquil Jabbar, an Iraqi television cameraman who lives across the street from the jail. Earlier Monday, demonstrators hurled stones and Molotov cocktails at British tanks, and at least four people were killed. Read more

db: We are in the shit big time in Basra now. Maybe it's just possible that Jack Straw was right earlier today when he said that the UK is part of the problem in Iraq.

[link](#)

Report: British Tanks Free Soldiers In Dramatic Re

[Witnesses Say Tanks Crash Through Basra Jail Walls, Freeing Two Britons](#)

(AP) BASRA, Iraq In a dramatic show of force, British soldiers used tanks to break down the walls of the central jail in this southern city Monday and freed two Britons, allegedly undercover commandos arrested on charges of shooting two Iraqi policemen, witnesses said. The Basra governor called the rescue a "barbaric" act of aggression.

But in London, the Ministry of Defense said in a statement that two British troops held by Iraqi authorities in Basra were released as a result of negotiations. It said the two service personnel were with British forces.

A Defense spokesman added he had no information suggesting they were freed as a result of any overt military action. But the spokesman stopped short of denying reports that British tanks crashed through the walls of a jail in Basra to free the two troops.

British Broadcasting Corp. quoted an unidentified Iraqi official in Basra as saying that the two Britons "were driving a civilian car and were dressed in civilian clothes when a shooting took place between them and Iraqi patrols."

In a public humiliation, Arab satellite television stations showed pictures of two Western men sitting on the floor of the jail building with their hands tied behind their backs. One of the men had a bandage covering most of the top of his head, the other had blood on his clothes. Television commentary identified them only as Britons.

The fighting in the oil city of Basra, 340 miles south of the capital, erupted after British armor encircled the jail where the two Britons were being held. Demonstrators, apparently angry about the shootings of the policemen, hurled stones and Molotov cocktails at British tanks, and at least two people were killed.

During the melee one British soldier could be seen in a photograph scrambling for his life from a burning tank and the rock-throwing mob.

Aquil Jabbar, an Iraqi television cameraman who lives across the street from the jail, said about 150 Iraqi prisoners fled as British commandos stormed inside late Monday and rescued their comrades.

Press Association, the British news agency, reported that three British soldiers were hurt during the violence, but said none of their injuries was life-threatening, according to Ministry of Defense officials in London.

British military officials had declined to comment on reports the two arrested men were soldiers operating undercover wearing Arab civilian clothing, but the Ministry of Defense told Press Association that "two military personnel were detained by Iraqi authorities earlier today."

Mohammed al-Waili, the governor of the province, said British raid was "barbaric, savage and irresponsible."

"A British force of more than 10 tanks backed by helicopters attacked the central jail and destroyed it. This is an irresponsible act," al-Waili said, adding that the British force had spirited the prisoners away to an unknown location.

While the Shiite-dominated south of Iraq, where 8,500 British troops are based,

has been far quieter than Sunni regions to the north, Britons have come under increasingly frequent attacks in recent weeks. The British military has reported 96 deaths since the war began in 2003.

That compares with the deaths of 1,899 Americans who are stationed nearer the violent insurgent regions around Baghdad and stretching west to the Syrian border.

This past summer, freelance journalist Steven Vincent wrote a column in The New York Times accusing Basra police of being infiltrated by Shiite militiamen. Shortly thereafter, on Aug. 2, Vincent was abducted at gunpoint and his body was discovered that night on the side of the highway south of Basra. A senior British official said Islamic militants — and not Iraqi police — probably killed Vincent.

To the north Monday, an estimated 3 million pilgrims — some carrying signs reading "We welcome martyrdom" — jammed the holy city of Karbala for a major Shiite festival in defiance of insurgent declarations of all-out sectarian war.

And an Iraqi court in Baghdad sentenced one of Saddam Hussein's nephews to life in prison for funding the country's violent insurgency and bomb-making after a previously unannounced trial. It was the first known trial of any of the former leader's family.

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But there were no attacks in Karbala, where security was so tight that authorities had banned vehicles from entering for several days before the holiday. Pilgrims were forced to pass through seven checkpoints inside the city before reaching holy shrines. About 6,000 policemen and Iraqi army troops were deployed in and near Karbala, and two leading Shiite militias provided additional security around the shrines of Imam Hussein and Imam Abbas.

As the festival continued, al-Qaida in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi purportedly issued a new vow, promising he would not attack followers of radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr and other Shiite leaders opposed to Iraq's U.S.-backed government.

[link](#)

Iraq: Daring British rescue operation or terrorism?

BBC: UK soldiers 'storm' Basra prison

British forces have rescued two UK servicemen who were arrested by Iraqi police in the southern city of Basra.

Official Iraqi sources say British tanks stormed the city's jail, but the Ministry of Defence says the men's release was negotiated.

Basra governor Mohammed al-Waili said it was a "barbaric act of aggression".

The arrests sparked clashes in which UK tanks came under attack. Two civilians were reportedly killed and three UK soldiers were injured.

MoD officials insist they have been talking to the Iraqi authorities to secure the release of the men - who were reported to be working undercover.

But they do acknowledge a wall was demolished as UK forces tried to "collect" the men Iraqi police accused of firing on them.

However, sources in the Iraqi Interior Ministry say six tanks were used to smash down the wall in a daring rescue operation.

Witnesses told the Associated Press around 150 prisoners escaped during the operation but Iraqi officials later denied any prisoners had escaped.

Earlier, two British tanks, sent to the police station where the soldiers were being held, were set alight in clashes. Read more

db: 'Daring rescue operation' - sending tanks into a prison run by the 'sovereign Iraqi government' that we are supposedly protecting from 'terrorists' and 'criminals'? What will be the repercussions of this move of desperation by the British Army? Why were they determined to remove the UK 'undercover' soldiers from Iraqi custody so swiftly? How come diplomacy was ruled out? Why did the Brits have explosives in their car? What will the Iraqis believe long after the British media have been fed the bullshit currently being thought up at the MOD and have started looking the other way? And, importantly, excluding the Iraqis who were killed today how many more will die because of these acts?

I am not confident that we will get credible answers - and in their absence the British Army's reputation in Iraq will take another dive - and accusations that the US and UK forces are operating a Salvador strategy in Iraq will become louder and more convincing.

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13 comments

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IRAQI JAILERS ARE II DOT

by patel on 19.09.2005 [20:43]

How could terrorists attack on jail and get out of two British terrorists out of the jail?

What now for Basra?

by exo on 19.09.2005 [20:46]

The Washington Post report http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/09/19/AR2005091900572.html?nav=rss_world that Iraqi Police had accused the Brits of 'planting bombs' does not appear in all news items on this unbelievable series of events.. Neither does the escape of Iraqi prisoners at the time UK tanks stormed the building - which was detailed on BBC Worldservice radio. What now for Basra?

What now for the Hearts and Minders??

by _merk_ on 19.09.2005 [20:58]

how utterly embarrassing for themthere's no way this can be spun or suppressed now. I wouldn't want to be a Brit in Basra. Once this is all over Iraq, and the world watching and having their suspicions confirmed, it will be all over for the occupation.

Historic day

by Zoraida on 19.09.2005 [21:02]

Today is a historic day for Iraq!

Cowardly scum

by insider on 19.09.2005 [21:41]

No I'm not talking about the Brits, I'm talking about the Iraqi Police who hadn't the balls to shoot the Brit bastards while they were escapeing. Rest assured that the Brits would be quick enough to shoot Iraqi police who they had arrested and were trying to escape. The Iraqi Police deserve all they get for joining up with the U.K./U.S. terrorists.

to Zoraida

by afrench on 19.09.2005 [21:44]

why you say its an historic day for Iraq ?

Re: Cowardly scum

by _merk_ on 19.09.2005 [22:24]

If they had killed the Brits, the police would have been accused of murder & the dead Brits would

have become instant heroes and that would have been the end of it. We would have been deprived of knowing just how badly the Brits wanted their guys out of that jail. The Brits actually accused themselves by recovering their scum. Now they'll have to explain.

Historic Day

by marxoid on 19.09.2005 [22:24]

It is all round the world now that British soldiers, dressed as Arabs, killed Iraqi police and had explosives in their car. Iraqis, of course, already knew that these murderous false flag ops were going on. This incident will spread.

Historic day

by Zoraida on 19.09.2005 [22:43]

You pardon my English bad : today it is an historical day because the western mass media have insisted on showing to the zone of the south of Iraq as calm thanks to the presence of the English. This we know it that it is false, and these images demonstrate to the world with their rage that is fought in Basra like in the Baghdad, in the north like in the south, that the Iraqi resistance is compound of chiies, sunies, of Christians, of Kurds. That people do not support plus the situation and that soon will be war really. The strategy of the tension keeps awake to the world, with the indiscriminate use of the terrorism caused, as we know by intelligence agents, in the tactical mission of today of the MI6. It will be very difficult to continue saying that it is Al Qaeda/Zarqawi before the today evidence. The Iraqi people had suspicions on the authors of the pumps, today has certainties.

The civil war before these facts will not be so easy to them to do to the Pentagono. The Iraqi people today has the moral force to fight united against the invaders. Viva la Resistencia de los pueblos de Iraq, defendamos su derecho a la libertad y a la plena soberanía de su territorio!

They can always say

by ohm on 19.09.2005 [22:58]

Terrorists from Zarquawis AlQueida command slammed a carbomb into the walls of an IRAQI JAIL, freeing a leader of alqueida Basra operations linked to cells operating throughout SOUTHERN IRAQ.....but something tells me many IRAQIS wont believe it.

Reply to _merk_

by insider on 19.09.2005 [23:02]

I appreciate what you say but with regard to them having to explain, they'll tell exactly the same lies that they would have told had the brits been killed. They would only have been hero's in their own lunchtime and would be forgotten about in a few days. Who remembers the name of the last one. The Police could hardly be accused of murder when shooting escaping prisoners who were held in lawful custody. After all wasn't it the Brits who told them they were now the police with lawful authority to arrest and prosecute lawbreakers. These brits have probably been responsible for the deaths of large numbers of Iraqi's and only now did they get caught. By not shooting them they will be back on the streets tomorrow waging war against the people and continueing their genocide. A bit of bad press for a couple of days would be a small price to pay.. After all the Brits and the Yanks get bad press from time to time so they just shoot the journalists.

Things like this

by ohm on 19.09.2005 [23:39]

are never far from the mind of those who bare the brunt of the occupations false flag counter insurgency operations. The mehdi army and its ability to influence the actions of others, for example the badr brigade torching of SADR's office in NAJAF shows the exsistance of an underground information network operating outside mainsteam IRAQ gov. propaqqanda. within minutes they were in the streets all over the south of IRAQ targeting and burning Badr offices, challenging the authority of those who think to absorb or kill them. News of the Brits, the detention of the sadrs leaders in Basra, the bombings and mortaring of mehdi army positions are probably spreading at the speed of light. Zarquawi has a face and its the face of the occupation.

@insider

by _merk_ on 19.09.2005 [23:46]

we're on the same page, but I think you have the cooler head. I just thought that with the evidence still walking around, it'll be harder for them to lie. But your point that they'll keep killing now ... definitely a good possibility. The way I read this news is that the 2 scums were freed when the other brits broke down the prison wall, so I didn't see this as an escape but as the occupation asserting itself as the law. If I were an Iraqi cop, I would not shoot at that point. Whatever ... let's just hope that this incident is a big step towards exposing USUK's false flag ops.

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