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Witnesses Say U.S. Bombs Hit Iraqi Hospital

by **Samia Nakhoul**

BAGHDAD - U.S. missiles hit a Red Crescent maternity hospital in Baghdad and other civilian buildings on Wednesday, killing several people and wounding at least 25, hospital sources and witnesses said.

The attacks, which occurred at 9:30 a.m., surprised motorists who had ventured out during a lull in the bombing. This correspondent saw at least five burned-out and twisted cars parked in the middle of the road. Witnesses said the drivers burned to death inside.

Residents said U.S. planes raided the Mansour area, firing at least three missiles. They hit the hospital, the nearby Baghdad trade center complex and buildings housing the Pharmacist and Teachers' Unions.

The blast caused extensive damage in the hospital.

"There were air raids. Some 25 people who work and live in the area were wounded. Three of our Red Crescent staff were also wounded. We brought all the wounded in our ambulances to two hospitals," Red



An Iraqi woman sits crying in front

Crescent official Abdel-Hameed Salim told Reuters at Baghdad's al-Iskan hospital.

He said among the Red Crescent casualties was doctor Mohammad Fadel, who was getting ready for a normally hectic day in war times. Also injured was a patient who had come to see a doctor. He was hit, requiring his leg to be amputated.

"We had a lot of medical supplies for rescue operations and we don't know if they were destroyed or not," Salim added.

U.S. military spokesman Brigadier General Vincent Brooks told reporters in Qatar: "I am not aware of the Red Crescent report, so I cannot address it."

HIGHWAY POCKMARKED WITH CRATERS

Fires and smoke smoldered hours later from Baghdad's luxurious trade center, which was devastated in the attack. It lies next to a government security building, which was apparently missed in the bombings.

The highway leading to the hospital and the trade fair was pockmarked with craters caused by the attack.

Many of the wounded received first aid at the emergency ward of Iskan hospital while some were immediately taken to theater for surgery.

At two hospitals in Baghdad, Reuters journalists saw at least 10 civilians who were wounded in air raid attacks.

After an unusual lull in bombing for most of the night, strikes resumed shortly after 3 a.m. as the U.S.-led war to oust Iraqi President Saddam Hussein entered its 14th day.

U.S. planes pounded central Baghdad earlier in the day, striking at least three times a

of her destroyed house following an air strike on the outskirts of Baghdad April 2, 2003. U.S. aircraft hit a Red Crescent maternity hospital in Baghdad, the city's trade fair, and other civilian buildings, killing several people and wounding at least 25, hospital sources and a Reuters witness said. Photo by Faleh Kheiber/Reuters

compound where President Saddam Hussein's son Qusay has his headquarters and sending thick smoke into the sky. Qusay commands the Republican Guard.

"It was a very powerful explosion," correspondent Nadim Ladki said. "It's the biggest I've seen today in daylight."

Sustained explosions pounded the southern outskirts of the sprawling city until dawn, stopped for a time, and then resumed at mid-morning.

Republican Guards are believed to have dug in south of the city to defend Saddam from advancing U.S. troops. Anti-aircraft fire was also heard on the outskirts.

The heavy bombing comes as U.S ground forces pressed on toward Baghdad from the west and the east. The vanguard of U.S.-led land troops have approached to within 19 miles of Baghdad from the south.

U.S. forces have targeted key government buildings, military and presidential sites in the city of over five million people in the war that began on March 20.

Smoke poured out of a tall building to the west of the city center, where many government buildings are located. A communications center near a bridge across the river Tigris also appeared to have been hit. Flames rose from the area.

Smoke also rose to the east of the center in an area where air force and other military buildings are situated. Tracer fire lit the sky and warplanes could be heard flying overhead as anti-aircraft fire stuttered.

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