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Secret US Mass Graves of Green Card Hopefuls.. a scoop in progress

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Did the Pentagon order the assassination of a journalist in order to cover up secret mass burials of dead U.S. soldiers and U.S.-contracted mercenaries in the deserts around Baghdad? What is really behind the killing of my colleague and friend, the Palestinian Reuters cameraman, Mazen Dana, in Bagdad?

Secret Burials in the Desert

Ultimate Disrespect for U.S. Army Personnel and US-Contracted Mercenaries in Iraq

Aug. 19, 2003

By Kawther Salam

The Daily Life of Kawther Salam

<http://members.aon.at/hpkr/kawther/K20030819A.htm>

Did the Pentagon order the assassination of a journalist in order to cover up secret mass burials of dead U.S. soldiers and U.S.-contracted mercenaries in the deserts around Baghdad?

What is really behind the killing of my colleague and friend, the Palestinian Reuters cameraman, Mazen Dana, in Bagdad? Is the Pentagon really scared of the media telling the U.S. public what is really going on in Iraq? Do the criminals in the Pentagon want to cover their crimes against their own soldiers by killing journalists in Iraq? If so, then this is what can be called organized terror.

The U.S. troops obviously felt threatened and in big danger due to the Palestinian Reuters cameraman, Mazen Dana, who was investigating a story about secret burials of U.S. mercenaries and soldiers in mass graves in far-away places in deserts strips around Baghdad, burials which had obviously been authorized by the commanders of the U.S. army.

Mazen's scoop began when he realized that that the U.S. troops were burying human bodies wrapped in plastic in the desert. Initially, he thought that these were the bodies of Iraqi people. He kept watching and investigating the activities of the U.S. troops. He kept developing his scoop, working around different U.S. units and military jails, trying to figure out where the bodies had come from, and whether they were Iraqi or not.

Ultimately he found a source, a U.S. mercenary, who told him that those buried were not Iraqis, but mercenaries who had been promised green cards and U.S. citizenship in return for serving in the U.S. Army. Besides, according to this source, not few of those interred were Americans who had been killed in combat. Mazen had been able to film the activities of the U.S. army, and their secret mass graves. He was experienced in journalistic work in areas of conflict and under dangerous conditions. In our hometown Hebron, he had been covering the Israeli Duvdevan units, essentially death squads of the Israeli army which can not normally be filmed. Since he had become aware of what the Americans were doing in the desert, he kept the secret to himself. The intelligence units of the U.S. Army probably knew that Mazen was uncovering, and they must have feared that their secret desert burials would expose the Pentagon and the Army for involvement in a big scandal.

The U.S. Army prides itself of always bringing home their dead, and this ultimate disrespect for their own would certainly be frowned upon by the American society at large, even if not few of them were mercenaries. The story also had the potential of making foreigners think twice before joining the U.S. military forces as mercenaries, nobody wants to be disrespected in this most abject and impious way, not even those who would sign up as mercenaries.

During his last days, Mazen felt that the U.S. Army were observing him. Ten days before his death, he called home to Hebron and told his family that he feared for his life because of the story he was investigating, and he promised them to return as soon as he had finished his research. On Sunday, August 17, 2003, at noon and in bright sunshine, Mazen Dana was assassinated by the U.S. Army outside Abu Ghraib prison, where it had previously given him permission to film.

According to my colleague, Nael al-Shyoukhi, who was with Dana at the time of his death, the camera team was known to the U.S. military personnel at the prison. Al-Shyoukhi said that they had asked for permission to interview an officer, which had been denied. The soldiers had seen their IDs and knew about their mission and intentions.

Nael Al-Shyoukhi said "after we filmed we went into the car and prepared to go when a convoy led by a tank arrived and Mazen stepped out of the car to film. I followed him and Mazen walked three to four meters. We were noted and seen clearly. The soldier on the tank shot at us. I lay on the ground. I heard Mazen, I saw him scream and touch his chest with his blood-covered hand".

The Pentagon Response: The U.S officials said that the troops mistook Mazen's camera for a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) launcher. This was obviously a lie which nobody, not even naive people, will be able to believe. How can it be that the U.S. troops have the most technologically advanced sensors on their weapons, but will not be able to distinguish a camera from an RPG launcher at 50 meters in broad daylight? Did the U.S. troops learn to lie from their friends at the Israeli Defense Force (IDF)? This killing was a prepared assassination by the U.S troops in order to cover up their criminal activities, which Mazen had discovered and was about to expose.

When I received the news of the killing of Mazen Dana, I thought for the first moment that the Israeli government was involved or in some way behind it. Mazen Dana had troubled the Israeli occupation more than enough for one man.

The Israeli occupation forces targeted Dana several time during this Intifada, and even before that during the 'peaceful' period. He was shot in Hebron in 1998 by the IDF, together with his colleague Nael Al-Shyiouskhi. Mazen Dana had been exposing the daily crimes of killing and collective murder in Hebron and the occupied territories, and he was shot again by the IDF during 2001. The Israelis were obviously not interested in his return from Iraq to Hebron.

All Palestinians know that the U.S. Pentagon and the Israeli Defense Ministry do work together closely. Maybe we do not realize this, but we are killed by the IDF soldiers who use U.S. bullets, grenades, rockets and missiles, airplanes and attack helicopters. The U.S is constantly providing Israel with highly developed killing machinery, around \$2 billions worth a year. That is more military aid than any other country receives from the U.S. It is also more aid (period) than any other country receives from the U.S. A quarter of the enormous military budget of the Jewish state is paid for directly by the U.S. American soldiers also did train Israeli soldiers to raid the Jenin refugee camp and other cities, they trained the Israelis in assassinating, killing and chasing "wanted" people, and in other so-called 'counter-insurgency techniques'. They also offered the Palestinian Authority (P.A.) Minister Muhammad Dahlan to train his forces to do the same. Soon the P.A. forces, instead of the IDF, will probably be chasing and murdering Palestinians.

When I called Hebron to offer my condolences to Mazen Dana's family and to inquire about his death, I was informed about his investigation in Iraq on secret mass burials by the U.S. soldiers in the desert. This made me worry about my other colleague, Nael Al- Shyiouskhi, who was still in Iraq, so I delayed writing this story until after Nael's safe return to our home town, Hebron.

Mazen Dana held a B.A. in English Literature from Hebron University. He was a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine during his time in the University. For this he was a targeted and harassed by the Israeli

occupation forces, even after he stopped his political activities.

During the first Intifada I worked for a short while with Mazen as a correspondent for Voice of Palestine Radio in Jerusalem. After that I worked with Al Fajir Newspaper, and Dana continued his work with different media. He was investigated several times by the Israeli civil administration in Hebron. He became a peace supporter after the signing of the Oslo Agreement in 1993, and he then became a member of Fatah Peace Wing. He had been employed by Reuters since 10 years as a cameraman to cover the conflict in his hometown Hebron. Mazen Dana and Nael Al-Shyoukhi had been working together for eight years when Mazen was shot last Sunday.

The Israeli occupation intelligence units continued considering Mazen Dana as a member of Popular Front party even after he discontinued his activities with it, and they did not grant him the an Israeli Government Press "GPO" Card, or a travel permit to visit the Reuters office in Jerusalem.

Dana was attacked several times by Jewish settlers and IDF soldiers in Hebron. In May 2000, Dana was shot in the leg with a rubber-coated bullet while filming Palestinian youths throwing stones towards the Hebron area H2 under Israeli control. Dana was arrested hundreds of times. In 1997 Dana was arrested as a result of filming IDF soldiers who were arresting me during an incident at the Halhol bridge border, where the IDF soldiers had caused the death of a nine-year-old child by preventing him from reaching a hospital in Hebron during a curfew which was imposed on the city, during peace time.

Dana established the Journalist House of Hebron during the year 2002 despite the daily attacks and the constant threat of arrests made by the IDF soldiers against all Hebronite journalists.

The last time I met my colleague Mazen Dana was at the end of May 2002 at our colleague's house: Hossam Abu Allan, an Agence France- Presse (AFP) photographer who was arrested and imprisoned by the IDF for five months without being tried or even charged. At 10:30 on the same night Mazen drove with me in his jeep to "Al-Beweareh" mountain to film IDF tanks, 54 armed vehicles were arriving to Hebron on Road 60 as the military was preparing to re-occupy the city of Hebron, the area H1, normally under PA control.

Mazen Dana had a long experience as a television cameraman, and he had experienced the hardships and harsh working conditions of journalistic work under military occupation. He left behind a wife and four wonderful children in Hebron. He also left a courageous and historic journalistic experience and a legacy for other journalists behind him.

Mazen Dana left behind him a wife and four cute children in Hebron. He left a courageously historical journalistic experience and signs for other journalists behind him.

To most people, his death is but one more display of the abjectly criminal behavior of the gang in control at the Pentagon. To those of us who knew him and who worked with him, he will be a missed and respected colleague, friend, community and family member.

KS

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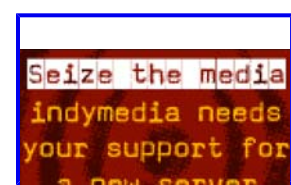
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