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11 People, mostly women and children, Killed in U.S. Raid north of Baghdad

By: ZIAD KHALAF, Associated Press Writer on: 15.03.2006 [18:41] (183 reads)
Police Capt. Laith Mohammed, in nearby Samarra, said American warplanes and armor flattened the house and killed the 11 people inside.

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15/3/2006

ISAHAQI, Iraq - U.S. forces flattened a house during a raid north of Baghdad early Wednesday, killing 11 people — mostly women and children, while insurgent attacks elsewhere left five dead, police and relatives said.

The U.S. military acknowledged the raid and said it caught one insurgent. It took place near Balad, about 50 miles north of the capital. But the military said only four people were killed — a man, two women and a child.

Political leaders, meanwhile, remained deadlocked on the composition of a new government on the eve of parliament's first session since the Dec. 15 elections. At 8 p.m., a driving ban came into effect in the capital that will last until 4 p.m. Thursday, which has been declared a public holiday.

Authorities in the Shiite holy city of Karbala, 50 miles south of Baghdad, imposed their own six-day driving ban to protect pilgrims from a wave of sectarian killing.

The U.S. military is dispatching an Army battalion of about 700 soldiers to Iraq from their base in Kuwait to provide extra security for pilgrimages connected to Monday's holiday, officers said in Washington. Tens of thousands converge for the religious commemorations, which drew increased attacks in 2004 and 2005.

Monday marks the end of the 40-day mourning period after the death of Imam Hussein in A.D. 680, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad.

The decision to add the armored unit, perhaps for as little as 30 days, is in contrast to the Bush administration's hopes to substantially draw down the U.S. military presence in Iraq. There are about 133,000 troops here.

Police Capt. Laith Mohammed, in nearby Samarra, said American warplanes and armor flattened the house and killed the 11 people inside.

An AP reporter in the area said the roof collapsed. Eleven bodies, wrapped in blankets, were taken to the Tikrit General Hospital, relatives said.

Associated Press photographs showed the bodies of two men, five children and four other covered figures at the hospital accompanied by grieving relatives. The victims were covered in dust and bits of rubble.

Riyadh Majid, who said he was the nephew of the killed head of the family — Faez Khalaf — told AP that U.S. forces landed in helicopters and raided the home. Khalaf's brother, Ahmed, said nine dead were residents of the house and two were visitors.

"The killed family was not part of the resistance, they were women and children," Ahmed Khalaf said. "The Americans have promised us a better life, but we get only death."

The U.S. military said it was targeting and captured an individual suspected of supporting foreign fighters for the al-Qaida in Iraq terrorist network.

"Troops were engaged by enemy fire as they approached the building," said Tech. Sgt. Stacy Simon. "Coalition forces returned fire utilizing both air and ground assets."

Bombs killed four more people and injured dozens Wednesday.

Three explosions hit Baqouba, 35 miles northeast of Baghdad. A suicide bomber on a bicycle missed a police patrol, killing two civilians and injuring six others, police said.

Later, an explosion in a cell phone shop killed two more people and injured 12, while another bomb targeting a police patrol injured two officers, police said.

A car bomb targeting a police patrol exploded in western Baghdad, killing at least one person and injuring 15, said police Lt. Thaer Mahmoud.

Late Tuesday, a roadside bomb exploded as an official with the Shiite Badr group, drove through Tuz Khormato, 130 miles north of Baghdad, killing the official's son and injuring nine other people, said police Brig. Sarhad Qadir. The Badr group is linked to a Shiite militia accused of widespread abuses by Sunni Muslims.

The deaths of 87 men were blamed on deepening sectarian violence in recent days — most of them shot to death execution-style. Their timing linked much of the bloodshed to revenge slayings for a bomb and mortar attack in a Baghdad Shiite slum that killed 58 and wounded more than 200 on Sunday.

On Tuesday, the U.S. command reported two more soldiers died in fighting in Anbar province, raising the death toll of U.S. military members killed since the start of the war in March 2003 to 2,310, according to an AP count.

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