

Did U.S. use neutron bomb in Battle of Baghdad?

By Gary Wilson

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The U.S. military used neutron weapons in the Battle of Baghdad, says a former commander of Iraq's Republican Guard. And at least one retired U.S. Army officer is backing up his charge.

In an April 9 interview reported by Al Jazeera, Saifeddin Fulayh Hassan Taha al-Rawi says that, "U.S. forces used neutron and phosphorus bombs during their assault on Baghdad airport before the April 9, 2003, capture of the Iraqi capital."

The bombs incinerated about 2,000 elite Republican Guard troops but left the buildings and infrastructure at the airport intact, he added. (aljazeera.net)

The neutron bomb is designed to produce a minimal blast while releasing a massive wave of neutron and gamma radiation, which can penetrate armor or several feet of earth. This radiation is extremely destructive to living tissue. (britannica.com) The bomb has been in the U.S. arsenal for decades but has never been used in combat before.

While no major U.S. media have reported on the neutron bomb charge, David Hambling, author of "Weapons Grade: How Modern Warfare Gave Birth to Our High-Tech World," says there's something to it. Hambling notes that the U.S. has already admitted to the use of phosphorus weapons in the Iraq invasion.

Writing on April 13 for the Danger Room blog at Wired, Hambling says that from the description al-Rawi gives in the Al Jazeera interview of a series of explosions that killed the occupants of buildings without destroying the structures, "Interestingly, there is a weapon in the U.S. arsenal designed to do exactly that. ... The AGM-114N."

Hambling continues, "On May 15th, 2003, just a few weeks after the action at Baghdad airport, Donald Rumsfeld praised the new weapon. ... Although officially described as 'metal augmented' or even 'hyperbaric,' the new warhead is not distinguishable from thermobaric weapons which produce the same sort of enhanced blast with a lower overpressure and longer duration for more destructive effects. Like many thermobarics, the AGM-114N used finely powdered aluminum. The military are generally quiet about thermobarics because they have received such bad press. Human Rights Watch criticized them because they 'kill and injure in a particularly brutal manner over a wide area.' "

Weapons that have been described as thermobaric include flame-throwers and napalm. A BBC News article on March 4, 2002, said the U.S. was using thermobaric weapons in Afghanistan, and described how they employ a combination of heat and pressure, "distributing a very fine cloud of explosive material throughout the target which is then ignited. The heat and pressure

effects are formidable—soldiers caught in the blast could have the air sucked from their bodies and even their internal organs catastrophically destroyed.”

Too bloody to report

Retired U.S. Army Captain Eric May, a former intelligence and public affairs officer, believes that the U.S. military did use neutron weapons in the Battle of Baghdad. May was one of the participants in Cindy Sheehan’s original encampment outside George Bush’s Crawford, Texas, villa.

In an interview published by the Crawford, Texas, Lone Star Iconoclast (lonestaricon.com), May says, “The biggest story of the war became a non-event when the truth of the matter was that it was simply too bloody an event to report.

“The bogus rescue of Private Lynch was merely a distraction from the truth,” said May. “And the staged photo-op of the pulling down of Saddam Hussein’s statue was nothing more than a way to cement into people’s minds that it was an easy victory.”

Congressional hearings on April 24 heard testimony on “the histories of Pfc. Jessica D. Lynch and Cpl. Pat Tillman ... as egregious examples of officials’ twisting the truth for public relations in wartime.” (“Government Challenged on Lynch and Tillman,” *New York Times*, April 24)

Captain May says, “I think the Battle of Baghdad was emblematic of the whole misadventure in the Middle East. There is nothing that I thought then that I don’t think now has been validated by time. The American public still doesn’t know that there was a Battle of Baghdad because the media-military apparatus constructed the Private Jessica Lynch mess to hold attention.”

May continues: “The best evidence that I have from international sources, scientific sources, is that our position was becoming untenable at the Baghdad airport and we used a neutron warhead, at least one. That is the big secret of Baghdad airport.

“If one looks into international data, there are reportings of enhanced radiation of some livestock, and of human metabolic effects—death and disease. It explains why, after the Battle of Baghdad, we got fragmentary stories of things like truckloads of dirt being moved out and moved in. It made no particular sense at the time, until one puts it into perspective, as a decontamination operation. Again, that part of the Battle of Baghdad, the fact that we went nuclear, explains a lot of things that came out afterwards and also explains why it is that it had to be covered up.”

Whether it was a neutron bomb or the AGM-114N, the Pentagon used some sort of Weapon of Mass Destruction on Baghdad airport.

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