

AMERICA AT WAR

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No one knows how many civilians dying

Best guess is that more than 200 innocents have been killed by U.S. missiles

By NIKO PRICE
Associated Press Writer

Iraq-Jordan Border — Bombed-out cars on highways. Mothers weeping over dead children. A small boy seemingly asleep, the back of his head blown off.

Evidence of civilian casualties is not hard to find in Iraq, but as fierce fighting rages in the south and Baghdad is battered by bombs, nobody can count them.

The Iraqi government reports 194 civilian dead. The Red Cross says it can vouch for 14, but there could be many more. A Web site that compiles Western news media reports says between 199 and 278 are reported dead.

The reality is that none of these figures are complete or accurate.

"There are no solid figures on civilian casualties," Geoffrey Keele, UNICEF's

spokesman for Iraq, said Tuesday in Amman, Jordan.

U.S. officials say they are taking great pains to avoid killing civilians. Iraqi officials mock their assertions, and are largely succeeding in convincing large parts of the world that the war is targeting innocents.

As for overall figures, however, there is little information.

The International Committee of the Red Cross says it has counted 14 dead and 110 injured since Sunday in airstrikes on Baghdad. It has no figures for other parts of the country.

"We usually don't give casualty figures unless they're the result of our immediate observation," said Muin Kassis of the Red Cross in Amman.

In the southern city of Basra, where U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has warned of a humanitarian catastrophe, Kassis said: "We have no accurate account of casualties."

The Web site www.IraqBodyCount.net, which compiles news reports, gives a minimum count on civilian casualties of 199, and a maximum of 278. The range is due to conflicting reports.

Iraqi officials have reported more than 200 civilian casualties.

But most of the evidence of civilian casualties is anecdotal — although no less powerful.

Journalists, taxi drivers and refugees who show up at this border tell of dozens of bombed-out cars lining the highway from Baghdad.

Iraqi newspapers publish photographs of decapitated bodies.

Every day, most Arab television stations show footage from Iraqi hospitals, where men, women and children lie in agony from injuries attributed to U.S. missiles.

"My son was killed in the shelling," wailed a woman dressed in black, lying in a hospital bed next to another son, a toddler. Her image was broadcast on the Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya network.

Perhaps the greatest impact came from Qatar's Al-Jazeera network, which showed an Iraqi boy, maybe 12 years old, his head half blown off and a tranquil expression frozen on his face.

An Al-Jazeera anchor apologized for showing such disturbing pictures, but said: "The

world should know the truth."

Still photos taken from the network were carried on the front pages of newspapers across the Arab world. "America's missiles of freedom assassinate the children of Basra," read a headline in Lebanon's leading newspaper, As-Safir.

Syria's official news agency SANA reported that a U.S. missile hit a passenger bus carrying fleeing Syrian workers on Sunday, killing five people and injuring 10. A U.S. Central Command spokeswoman had no information on the report.

Another U.S. missile killed a Jordanian taxi driver on Thursday while he made a phone call at Kilo 160, a rest stop 150 miles west of Baghdad.

Taxi driver Sameer Sabah, a friend of the dead man, went pale when he heard one of his passengers at the Jordanian border speaking Spanish. Spain has been a key supporter of the U.S.-led war.

"Get out of my car before I do something," he said in a chilling monotone. "Your people killed my friend. He was killed by the cold hands of the American Army."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Protests against U.S. war turn violent in Syria, Lebanon, Libya

Damascus, Syria — Hundreds of thousands of people protested the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq — some burning American and British flags in the streets — in the Mideast's largest organized protests since the war in Iraq began. As protesters burned U.S. and British flags in Damascus, the Syrian government denounced the invasion as "unjustified aggression and a blatant violation of international laws." In the Libyan capital of Tripoli, hundreds of thousands of demonstrators chanted anti-American slogans as they marched to the Iraqi Embassy. In Lebanon, more than 10,000 people, mainly from leftist parties and supporters of the militant Hezbollah group, demonstrated under rain outside the United Nations House in downtown Beirut.

U.N. Security Council schedules emergency meeting for today

United Nations — The Security Council, responding to Arab and nonaligned nations that demanded an end to the war in Iraq and the withdrawal of U.S.-led troops, scheduled an emergency meeting for today. Guinea's U.N. Ambassador Mamady Traore, the current council president, announced Tuesday that he had received letters from both groups asking for an open meeting where any of the 191 U.N. member states can speak on the situation in Iraq. The meeting will begin this afternoon and is likely to continue into Thursday, he said.

Media groups outraged by NYSE's ban of Arab TV station's reporters

New York — Media watchdogs criticized the New York Stock Exchange's decision to revoke the credentials of Arab TV network Al-Jazeera, calling it outrageous and shortsighted. The network said Tuesday it was deeply concerned about revocation of the credentials of reporters Ammar al-Sankari and Ramsey Shiber. Al-Jazeera has blamed the decision on the satellite station's coverage of the war in Iraq. Exchange spokesman Ray Pellechia denied the station's war coverage was the cause. Citing security reasons, he said the exchange had chosen to limit the number of broadcasters working at the lower Manhattan exchange since the war began, giving access only to networks that focus on "responsible business coverage."

Turkey in line for more than \$8 billion in aid, Israel \$10 billion

Washington — Turkey is providing minimal help to the United States in the war against Iraq, and Israel is on the sidelines. But if Congress goes along with President Bush's request, Turkey will get \$1 billion that it can use to acquire loans of \$8 billion or more. And Israel will get \$1 billion in special military aid, and another \$9 billion in guaranteed loans. It's all part of a plan to help countries impacted by the war with Iraq. Israel, for instance, its economy in the doldrums, has had to take expensive precautions to guard against rocket attacks. Overall, Bush is asking Congress for about \$5 billion, including \$35.8 million to build a new U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, \$187 million to the State Department itself, and \$770 million to counter terrorism in Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Philippines and Colombia. Afghanistan, alone, would get \$400 million.

Public's confidence in war's success drops, but resolve still strong

Washington — Images of battered American POWs, a downed Apache helicopter and U.S. fatalities in Iraq have had a dramatic impact on the public's perception of the war. Just 38 percent said the conflict was going well on Monday, down from 71 percent last Friday according to a poll by the Pew Research Center. But the plummeting confidence barely changed overall support for the war and President Bush's stewardship. About seven in 10 Americans said the U.S.-led military campaign was the right thing to do, and overall approval of the president remained high at about 71 percent, according to the daily survey conducted March 20-24.

Food agency plans to ask U.N. for \$1 billion to feed Iraqis

Rome — With food dwindling for millions of Iraqis, a U.N. aid agency will make the biggest single request for cash in its history — more than \$1 billion to help feed the war-stricken nation for about six months. About 13 million people — 60 percent of Iraq's 22 million — are completely dependent on food handouts, World Food Program spokesman Trevor Rowe said. U.N. officials pulled out of Iraq after the start of the U.S.-led war last week, and Iraqis have about five weeks of food left, the agency estimates. "We expect that we will be asking for over \$1 billion," Rowe said in an interview at the agency's Rome headquarters. "We anticipate that this could well turn into the largest humanitarian operation in history."

Second soldier dies from injuries suffered in grenade attack

Boise, Idaho — A second serviceman has died from wounds suffered when an Army sergeant tossed three grenades into a command tent of the 101st Airborne Division in Kuwait, family members said. Air Force Maj. Gregory Stone, 40, based in Boise, was pronounced dead early Tuesday at an Army field hospital in Kuwait, the Idaho Air National Guard said. Capt. Christopher Scott Seifert, 27, of Easton,

Foreign media are showing a different war

Tone is more skeptical than here

By SHELLEY EMLING
Cox News Service

New York — Journalists from around the world are reporting the war in Iraq through a very different lens than U.S.-based media, one often colored by a mistrust of the Bush administration and U.S. intentions in general.

"You see a lot more skepticism in other parts of the world," said Alice Chasan, editor of World Press Review, which compiles reports from media in other countries.

The context of many foreign reports is "What is the United States really trying to do? Is the war necessary?" she said. "Whatever happens is being seen through the prism of President Bush being arrogant."

By contrast, "among the U.S. press, there tends to be a bandwagon effect and a fog of patriotism that has at times appalled me," Chasan said. "It's something you don't see elsewhere."

Some foreign journalists based in the United States agree that the press here has been far from tough.

"I think that most American journalists have been remarkably uncritical in covering the war," said Tom Buk-Swienty, U.S. bureau chief for the Danish weekly Weekendavisen.

"In an effort not to look unpatriotic and in order to please the majority of people in this country, some parts of the press have almost become a PR machine instead of being the watchdog that one would expect in a democracy," he said.

Patriotic displays include a U.S. flag adorning one corner of the front page of the New York Post. Meanwhile, broadcast reporters "embedded" with U.S. units in the region have begun to use the personal pronoun "we."

U.S.-based outlets have agonized over matters of taste as they weigh their audiences' appetite for gruesome photos. When a grenade explosion killed a member of the 101st Airborne Division on Saturday, CBS showed restraint even though a crew near the explosion taped explicit footage of the wounded.

Sunday night, when the Qatar-based Al-Jazeera satellite network showed graphic footage of dead and captured U.S. soldiers in Iraq, U.S. networks opted not to air it. CNN chose to carry a single grainy still image.

Foreign media outlets, by contrast, have not shied away from airing bloody images that portray in the most graphic form the carnage of war.

The British Broadcasting Corp., which has a reciprocal agreement with Al-Jazeera to share footage, showed excerpts showing the U.S. prisoners once it believed that family members had been notified.

Civilian casualties also tend to receive more attention overseas, Chasan said. "The foreign press is usually more likely to show what's happening to the Iraqi people," she said.

Desert patrol



IAN JONES / Associated Press

Members of British 16 Air Assault Brigade, 3 Army Air Corps, patrol the desert around the oil fields of North Rameila, Iraq, during a sand storm Tuesday.

Some in Baghdad seek solace in spirituality

By HAMZA HENDAWI
Associated Press Writer

Baghdad, Iraq — The imam's voice was deep and strong, belying his old age and frailty.

Leading a small group of worshippers in prayers, the silver-bearded cleric recited a Quranic verse recounting the tale of stone-throwing birds dispatched by God to defend the Ka'ba, Islam's holiest shrine in Mecca, against an invading African army.

The message was clear: God will stand by the Iraqis against American and British invaders. It may have provided some comfort to the worshippers who risked their lives leaving their homes and shelters to come to sunset prayers.

Baghdad's 5 million people, or at least those who haven't fled the city, are bracing for what promises to be a brutal battle for control of the Iraqi capital. Allied warplanes and helicopters have begun

attacking Saddam Hussein's elite Republican Guard units defending the city, and U.S. forces pounded military targets to the south with howitzers and rockets Tuesday in an all-night artillery barrage.

Baghdad's residents have endured nearly a week of allied bombings that, according to Iraqi officials, have left hundreds wounded or dead and damaged private property. But many believe the worst is yet to come, and some are seeking comfort in religion, while others have abandoned the "let-them-come" bravado and succumbed to fear.

"I was not afraid a week ago," a store owner in central Baghdad said Tuesday. "Now, I'll be lying to you if I say I am not afraid."

Baghdad was blanketed Tuesday in yellow as a sandstorm lashed the capital, concealing the gray smoke clouds that have hung over it for three days since authorities started oil fires around Baghdad to try to hide targets.

The severity of the storm forced residents to hunker down, with few people and cars left on the streets by late afternoon.

Earlier Tuesday, shops were open in several parts of the city and some buses were running. Garbage trucks reappeared on some streets and street sweepers were hard at work in some areas. Still, uncollected garbage piled up elsewhere.

More and bigger trenches were being dug around the city, including one in the courtyard of the Iraq museum, home to priceless antiquities, some dating back 7,000 years or more. Additional security and policemen were on the streets, and residents said members of the feared intelligence agencies were also deployed.

State radio and television continued broadcasting patriotic songs and archival footage of Saddam Hussein, together with emotional messages of support from Iraqis for their president of 23 years.

Sub's 'nukes' get no publicity, but plenty of work

By ROBERT A. HAMILTON
Day Staff Writer

Aboard the USS Providence — People who get a tour of a U.S. Navy submarine get to see the control center where war is waged, the weapons the boat will fight with, and the accommodations for the crew who will do the fighting.

But all that represents barely half the ship. Beyond a sealed door behind the crew's dining area is the other half, draped in secrecy for more than a half-century: the engineering spaces.

There's little the crew can say about that area, other than the giant turbines and steam generators keep it at a constant temperature of about 100 degrees and it can rise another 20 degrees or so pretty fast if the air conditioning is shut off.

"Every time you hear 'reactor scram,' every time you hear 'flooding,' every time you hear 'fire,' we have to shut off the air conditioning," said Senior Chief Electricians' Mate Allan A. Fisher, the engineering department master chief on the Providence.

The department comprises about 45

"nukes," highly trained machinist mates, electronics technicians and other specialists, as well as 15 "A-gangers," the auxiliaries who run the mechanical equipment near the back of the boat.

The nukes are predominantly young men in their 20s who were standouts in their technical classes and then had gone on for two more years of special schooling, first at nuclear power school in Charleston, S.C., then at training ship in Charleston or a nuclear plant prototype in New York.

Their enlistment is for six years, instead of four, a commitment that reflects the Navy's greater investment in them, Fisher said.

The nukes are often only seen in the forward sections of the ship when they're sleeping or eating. They report to the ship earlier than everybody else to get it running, and they have to maintain a watch even when the ship is in port because a nuclear reactor requires constant monitoring.

Many of the systems on board can be maintained while the ship is steaming, but most of the work has to wait until the ship is in port and the plant has cooled down.

In addition, there are a lot of preparations to get the nuclear reactor ready, so when the Providence deployed 10 days early in February, the nukes lost the last weekend with their families to come in and work 15-hour days preparing for the restart.

"It's not like a gas-turbine plant where you can show up 10 minutes before the maneuvering watch, push a button and you're ready to go," Fisher said.

The engineer, or "Eng," is Lt. Matt Mulcahy, who is responsible for everything in the aft portion of the ship. Every officer except "Chop," the supply officer, is nuclear-qualified, which means after college they got six months of nuclear-power school, six months at a nuclear prototype, and three months at Naval Submarine School before reporting to their first ship as junior officers.

About two years into a JO tour, officers must take the Prospective Nuclear Engineering Officer course, eight weeks of self-paced study followed by a five-hour written exam and interviews with two top officials at Naval Reactors in Washington, D.C.

"If you pass, you're certified to be an engi-

neer," Mulcahy said. "If you don't, you have a chance to take it one more time. After that, you're done. You would come back to the ship and finish your time as a junior officer, but you would not go on to become a department head."

He said junior officers have to arrive at a submarine prepared to work hard.

"They have to become experts in the engineering plant at the same time they're becoming experts at tactics," Mulcahy said. "It can be a very hectic year-and-a-half."

Some navies, including the British Navy, operate nuclear submarines differently. Officers are designated as either "forward" — concentrating on weapons and tactics, or "aft" — specialists in propulsion. Mulcahy said that while that might put less pressure on the officers, he prefers the U.S. Navy system.

"I think you're a better ship driver if you know what the propulsion plant can do for you," he said. "If you know the capability of the propulsion plant, you can better tactically employ the ship."

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