

# U.S. officials face allegations of prisoner abuse

Contrarily, a U.S. civilian's escape from Iraqi captors provides an uplifting story

By Deborah Horan  
Chicago Tribune (KRT)

BAGHDAD, Iraq — American Thomas Hamill, the truck driver abducted in early April and shown in footage released by his captors, was found alive Sunday by U.S. soldiers on patrol north of Baghdad after apparently escaping from his captors.

The good news came on an otherwise grim day elsewhere in Iraq, as nine soldiers were killed in three incidents, and controversy grew over alleged prisoner abuse by U.S. soldiers, as the overseer of guards at U.S.-run prisons in Iraq, who is under investigation, lashed out at her superiors in published reports.

West of Baghdad, six soldiers were killed and 30 were wounded in a mortar attack on a military base outside the flash-point city of Fallujah, a Marine spokesman said. He declined to give further details, and it was unclear

whether the soldiers were Marines.

In Baghdad, two soldiers were killed when a pre-dawn roadside bomb detonated as their convoy passed, a military spokesman said. A few hours later, another soldier was killed and 10 were wounded when a bomb exploded near their military base in the northern city of Kirkuk, the spokesman said.

On Saturday night, Shiite militiamen attacked a U.S. convoy with small arms fire and rocket-propelled grenades near the southern city of Amarah. Two soldiers were killed, the military said.

The violence came as the Marines continued to recruit Iraqis, many of them former members of Iraq's former army, to a new security force set to patrol Fallujah amid hope that a fragile cease-fire might hold.

Last week, the Marines agreed to allow former senior commanders who served under Saddam Hussein to take charge of the Fallujah Brigade in a shift in strategy that the Bush administration hopes will curb an insurgency that has fueled weeks of fight-

ing in the city.

At least one Saddam-era officer, Gen. Jassim Mohammed Saleh, was named in early reports as a possible top commander of the unit. But a senior military official in Baghdad said Sunday that the makeup of the top leadership is under discussion. The brigade is likely to be commanded by another Saddam-era general, Mohammed Latif, the official said, and Saleh may be installed as commander of the brigade's 1st battalion.

But Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, cast doubt on whether either Iraqi general would hold a top position in the new Fallujah force, telling several television networks that neither one was formally approved.

"They have not been vetted; they have not been put in charge," Myers said.

Fallujah, the scene of heavy fighting since Marines entered the city on April 5, has been relatively calm since the Marines negotiated a deal with the town's tribal and ex-military leaders last week.

On Sunday, the city remained

quiet, as Marine's continued to pull back from front-line positions in the southern part of the city, Arab news channels reported. In Baghdad, military officials remained cautiously optimistic that calm might continue.

"Perhaps the belligerents in Fallujah are playing wait and see," a top commander said. "They don't know what to make of this (agreement)."

Hamill was discovered late Sunday morning when members of the 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry Regiment, spotted the 43-year-old civilian contractor while patrolling an oil pipeline near Balad, 35 miles south of Tikrit, a military official said.

Hamill identified himself to the soldiers and then led them to the house where he was held captive, the official said. Soldiers detained two Iraqis found inside, one armed with an assault rifle.

Hamill was taken by helicopter to a nearby military base and then moved to Baghdad, according to a statement from the 1st Infantry Division. A gunshot wound to his arm, apparently received during the initial kidnapping, was infected, the military said. He

otherwise was not injured and was reported in stable condition.

"He has spoken to his family," said Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt, a top military commander in Iraq. "He is now ready to get back to work."

Meanwhile, outrage over pictures of Iraqi prisoners apparently being brutalized by U.S. soldiers in a Baghdad prison continued to grow.

According to Newsweek, Brig. Gen. Janis Karpinski, the commander of the Army Reserve's 800th Military Police Brigade in charge of Iraq's prison guards, lambasted coalition commander Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez for dumping the blame for the treatment of the prisoners on her and other Army reserves.

"Holding me responsible for what happened at the squad level is absurd," Karpinski said in an exclusive interview published in this week's issue. "Why not hold Sanchez responsible?"

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## Officials: Episodes of prisoner abuse in Iraq 'isolated'

The military says the claims were reported and handled internally by U.S. officials

By Stephen J. Hedges  
Chicago Tribune (KRT)

WASHINGTON — Facing a growing international uproar over photographs that show the abuse of Iraqi prisoners held inside a U.S. military detention facility near Baghdad, the nation's top general said Sunday that the ill treatment of those detainees was isolated, and not representative of the U.S. military prisons elsewhere in the country.

"The pictures we've seen, the actions that we saw on those photographs, that is appalling behavior, not acceptable behavior by any standards," said Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "It's important to realize that it was American soldiers that turned these people in, and that as soon as we found out about it, we took very quick action to investigate that situation."

Myers, appearing on CBS' "Face the Nation," said an investigation is

under way, at the direction of Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, to determine whether abuse also occurred in other facilities. But he stressed that an investigation of the Abu Ghraib prison incidents suggests that it is limited to a single unit.

"Where a handful of people can sully the reputation of hundreds of thousands of people that are over there trying to give a better life to 50 million people, it's a big deal, because we take this very seriously," Myers said. "Our code of conduct, our ethics, our values, I think, it's known in society are very solid, among the highest standards of any organization, any group."

Myers comments came as human rights groups suggested that the mistreatment of prisoners by the U.S. military has occurred in other places, and is not limited to a single cell-block inside Abu Ghraib, a sprawling compound that was known as Iraq's most notorious prison during the reign of deposed Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

The military began to investigate reports of abuse by guards inside the

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Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

prison in January, and in March it announced that it had recommended charging six military police officers and suspended another 11 as a criminal investigation continued. One officer has so far been recommended for court-martial.

The Geneva Conventions prohibit "outrages upon the personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment" of prisoners.

The impact of the Abu Ghraib allegations erupted with new force last week, when the CBS program "60 Minutes II" released photographs taken by guards of Iraqi prisoners forced into humiliating poses.

The prisoners were naked and hooded, and were forced to kneel in a human pyramid or stand in sexually suggestive positions. One photograph shows a dead Iraqi prisoner.

Pressure for a broader, public

inquiry in the United States is building. Five Democratic senators asked for a review into the use of private contractors in Iraq, including those used in prisons. Sen. Joseph Biden, a Delaware Democrat and ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said Sunday that the Bush administration will have to move quickly to limit the damage caused by the prisoner abuse revelations.

"We should demonstrate to the Arab world that this is urgent," Biden said on the "Fox News Sunday" show. "This is the single most significant undermining act that's occurred in a decade in that region of the world, in terms of our standing, in my view."

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