

No Apologies

Undercovered #35: More news from international media.

Paul Bremer, head of the U.S. occupation in Iraq, promised, "We will capture or ... kill them until we have imposed law and order ... We dominate the scene and we continue to impose our will on this country" (*Guardian*). U.S. troops hunting Saddam Hussein recently killed up to 11 Baghdad civilians, including two children, their mother, and their crippled father, as the family drove toward an improvised checkpoint. Yarmouk hospital received the wounded and dead, including a man with "his brain outside his head." A doctor yelled at a Western reporter, "If an American came to my emergency room, maybe I would kill him" (*Independent*).

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•Masad Nuradin, veterinarian and father of two small daughters, hailed a taxi. American soldiers thought his daybook was a grenade and shot him. His brother ran to help and soldiers tied him up, then drove away with Masad's body. "We thought the American soldiers were our friends," said Masad's father. "No more" (*Occupation Watch*). Soldiers shot 12-year-old Mohammed Al-Kubaisa as he came up to his roof to sleep, then searched his family's house for non-existent gunmen. They pushed aside Mohammed's mother, who was holding her bleeding son. When a neighbor drove Mohammed toward the hospital, soldiers turned them back. Mohammed bled to death in the car.

•"In Iraq we are tribal people," said Ali Hatem, a university student. "When someone loses their son, they want revenge." Iraqi traditions also include financial compensation, but the Pentagon has new rules that Iraqis must prove "clear-cut negligence or wrongdoing by soldiers" after May 1 and in non-combat situations. (The deaths above would be called combat-related accidents.) Some Iraqis would appreciate apologies, but "Apologies are not something that we have as a normal procedure in the military processes," says Gen. Sanchez, commander of U.S. forces in Iraq (*San Francisco Gate*).

•Iraq Body Count estimates are up, from 6,091 to 8,002 Iraqi civilian deaths since the war began. But humanitarian workers say many Iraqis are not reporting deaths now, because they are afraid or don't know who to tell (*Knight Ridder*).

•According to UNICEF, cluster bombs and unguarded Iraqi munitions have injured 1,000 children since the war ended. Iraq Body Count estimates at least 20,000 wounded Iraqis. For example, Dina Sarhan, 21, lost her leg to U.S. shrapnel. Her requests for a prosthetic leg have been repeatedly denied. Iraq Body Count suggests that a U.S. program to aid the wounded would make Iraqis more positive toward Americans.

•U.S. soldiers and military families are angered by government plans to reduce im-

minent danger pay and family separation allowances (*Observer*).

•At Iraq battle sites, Seattle reporters measured radiation up to 1,500 times background levels (*Seattle Post-Intelligencer*). They tried to measure a Baghdad site where a precision-guided missile had landed, but curiously, a block of rubble and dirt had been scraped clean (Larry Johnson). The Pentagon is investigating 100 severe pneumonia cases among U.S. troops in Iraq and nearby. Suggested causes include anthrax vaccines (UPI) and uranium weapons (World Socialist Web). The Pentagon denied, then admitted dropping napalm on Iraqi troops to clear the way for U.S. forces advancing to

Baghdad. The new Mark 77 firebombs are harder to extinguish on human flesh than Vietnam-era napalm (*Sidney Morning Herald*).

•Pentagon researchers aim to create "Extended Performance War Fighters" who resist sleep five days without controversial "go pills." New possibilities include zapping soldiers' brains with electromagnetic energy, and modifying their DNA to include genes from white-crowned sparrows, who migrate from Alaska to California without sleeping for a week, or dolphins, who surface to breathe when sleeping (*The Age*).

•Afghanistan costs the U.S. \$1 billion in military expenses each month. The Bush administration budgeted zero dollars for reconstruction in 2003, but Congress added \$300 million. With Karzai (and Bush) up for election in 2004, the Bush administration now wants \$1 billion for highly visible Afghan projects: roads, schools, the Afghan Army, women's employment. Defense Undersecretary Douglas Fieth noted "the benefits, strategic and financial, of completing our mission there sooner rather than later." \$1 billion may be the farewell gift (*tompaine.com*).

•More than 80 miles of the Separation Wall between Israel and Palestine have been completed. The Wall will incorporate 10 to 15 percent of West Bank territory into Israel. Much of this land has olives, vegetables, and scarce water. Some 72,000 Palestinians will be cut off from their farmland, 31 towns and villages will become islands surrounded by wall, and Bethlehem will be divided. People will be separated from neighbors, hospitals, and schools. The wall is expected to cause many people to lose their livelihoods and become refugees (*Ha'aretz*, Mark Lance, B'tselem).

•Peace activists urge a congressional investigation of war profiteering by American companies in Iraq (Institute for Southern Studies). More than 400,000 people have sent letters to Congress demanding an independent committee to investigate intelligence used by the Bush administration in justifying the Iraq war (*moveon.org*). **ew**

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