

Bloodiest Month for Americans in Iraq

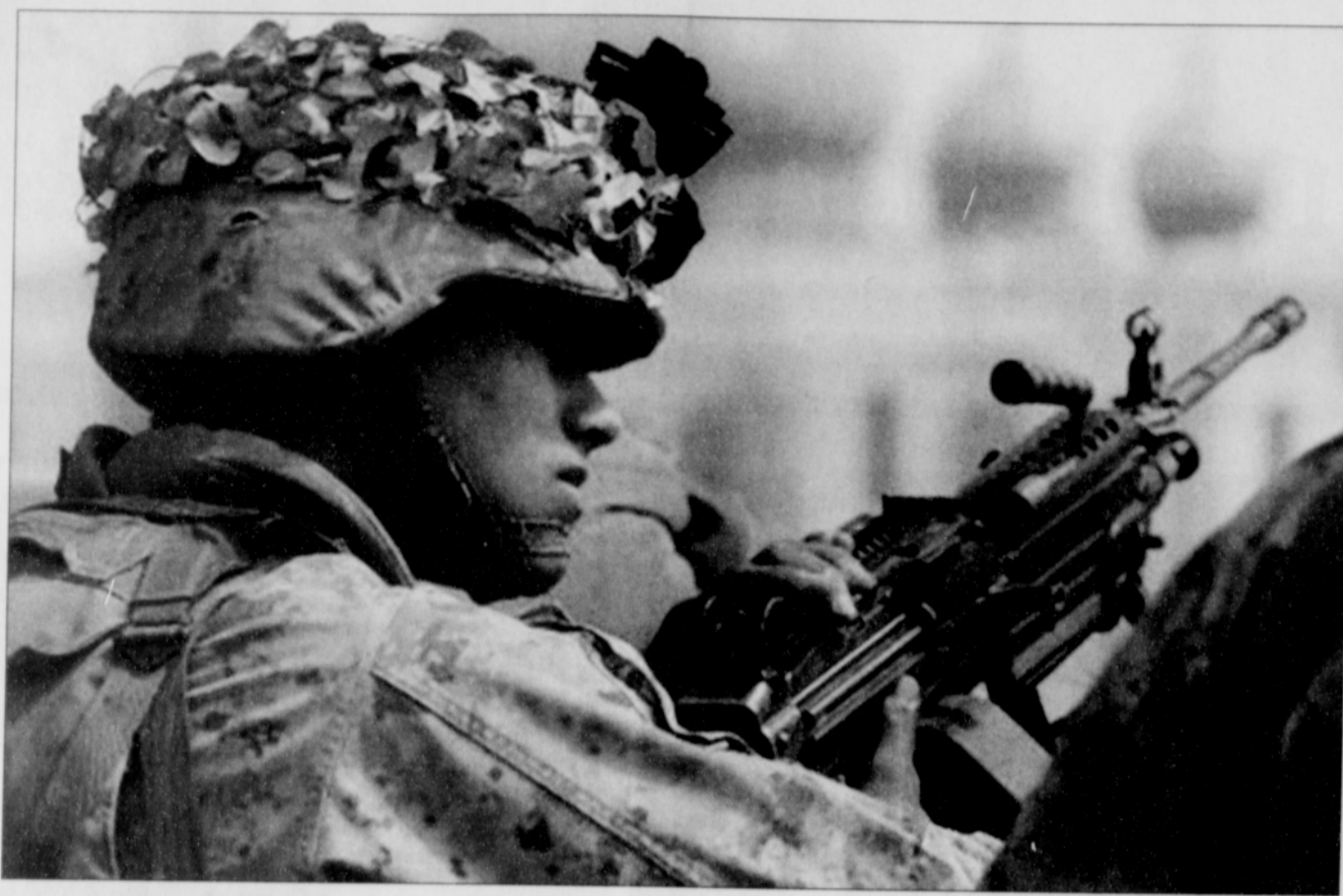
U.S. warplanes, artillery attack Sunni insurgents

(AP) — U.S. warplanes and artillery attacked Sunni insurgents holed up in a slum in a thunderous show of force that rocked Fallujah Tuesday, sending huge plumes of black smoke into the night sky. The assault came after American troops killed 64 gunmen near the southern city of Najaf.

An American soldier was killed Tuesday in Baghdad, raising the U.S. death toll for April to 115 - the same number lost during the invasion of Iraq that toppled Saddam Hussein last year. Up to 1,200 Iraqis also have been killed this month.

The second straight night of battles in Fallujah came as the extension of a fragile cease-fire ended in the turbulent city west of Baghdad. Marines have been preparing to begin patrols in the city later this week.

Tuesday's battle appeared far heavier than the previous night's clashes, in which a Marine and eight insurgents were killed - suggesting U.S. forces were trying to wear down gunmen in the Jolan neighborhood, a district of narrow alleyways and ramshackle houses.



Lt. Jonathan, Quintero of Tulare, Calif., from the 1st Battalion 5th Marines, mans his machine gun at a frontline position near a mosque in Fallujah, Iraq. (AP photo)

Fires were visible in the Jolan neighborhood, and mosque loudspeakers elsewhere in the city called for firefighters. U.S. aircraft dropped white leaflets over

Fallujah before nightfall, calling on insurgents to give up.

"Surrender, you are surrounded," the leaflets said. "If you are a terrorist, beware,

because your last day was yesterday. In order to spare your life end your actions and surrender to coalition forces now. We are coming to arrest you."

Fighting also broke out in Baghdad and in the south, where U.S. forces are in a standoff with militiamen loyal to radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, who is wanted on murder charges for allegedly killing a fellow cleric.

U.S. forces killed 64 Iraqis on Monday and Tuesday in battles with militiamen outside the Shiite holy city of Najaf, Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt said.

The United States is trying to avoid a resurgence of the intense fighting ahead of June 30 - the date for installation of a new Iraqi government.

Schools Struggle with Diversity Programs

(AP) — Nearly a decade ago, the Kent School District near Seattle was praised by parents, students and civil rights groups for its bold plan to stem racial discrimination and train staff in handling cultural differences.

Today, the very same district faces possible lawsuits over claims by 12 black students who say they were manhandled and handcuffed by school security officers.

The stark contrast is emblematic of how

schools nationwide have struggled to implement diversity programs, experts say.

Kent School District Superintendent Barbara Grohe has named a retired Army general to head a committee to investigate its security practices and a former Grant County sheriff will probe the incidents.

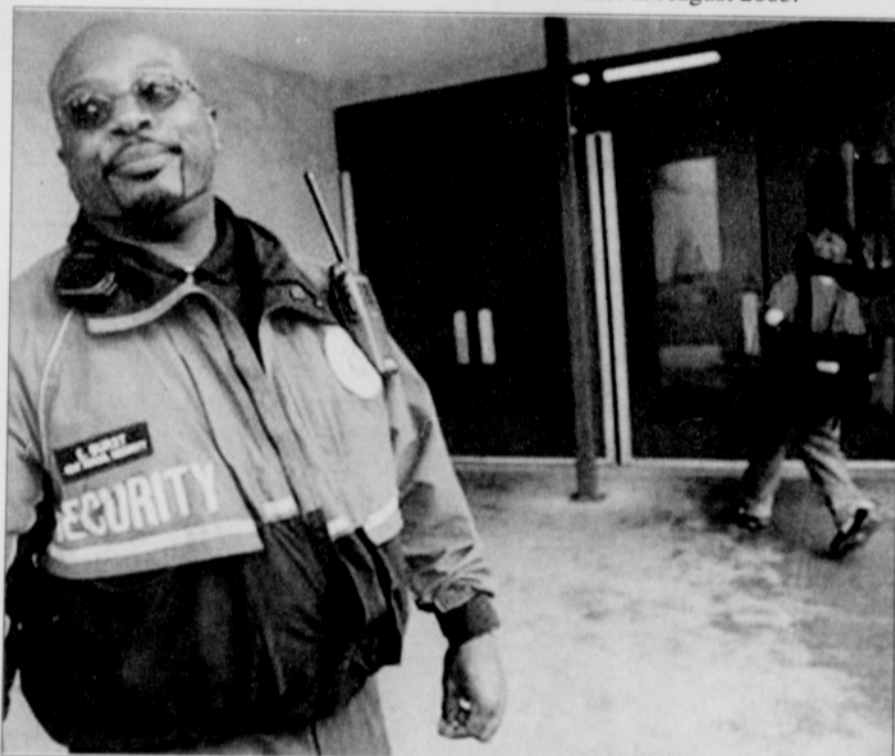
The choice of disciplinarians as investigators has angered the NAACP, which is behind the threat to file nearly \$40 million in lawsuits on behalf of the 12 students.

Carl Mack, president of the Seattle chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said the district's handling of the issue has been an "insult to the field of education."

Douglass-Swanson, says she was grabbed by the hair and thrown to the ground, a security officer's knees pressing into her back as her arms were wrenched behind her and handcuffs closed around her wrists.

Douglass-Swanson acknowledges flailing her arms and kicking her legs in an attempt to get free from the guard. She was charged with assault, placed in juvenile detention overnight and expelled.

At the district's Cedar Heights Junior High School in Covington, 38-year-old security officer Elmer Burst said he's used his handcuffs once since coming to work for the district in August 2003.



Security Officer Elmer Burst stands outside as a student returns to class after lunch break at Cedar Heights Junior High School in Covington, Wash. (AP photo)

The district, like others across the nation, has experienced a growing minority population, but critics contend Kent is not adapting.

"If they had followed through with the original recommendations and implementation strategies, they would have never found themselves in the situation they're in today," said Ray Lee, a Kent parent and member of the district's first diversity task force that met in 1995.

Experts say that efforts across the country to address cultural differences in schools have taken a back seat to funding struggles and federal mandates to improve student test scores.

Benjamin Baez, associate professor of educational policy studies at Georgia State University, said educators often are expected to improve test scores and "uneducate people about racism and make them better workers" while funds are cut for the very programs that would help achieve those goals.

"Now when we talk about diversity training we're talking as much about closing the achievement gap as we are about discipline procedures," Grohe said.

In claims filed last month by the NAACP, 12 black students, ranging in age from 11 to 17, say they were the victims of excessive force by school security officers.

One student, 13-year-old Sierra

Burst, who is black, said he'll do what he can to prevent any student from being harmed.

"If that means using restraints, I'll do it," he said.

The threat of a lawsuit by two black parents who claimed their children were harassed by white students triggered the creation of the Kent district's original diversity council in 1995, former co-chair Barbara Phillips said.

That committee made dozens of recommendations, including nonviolent crisis intervention training for staff and improving discipline records to monitor for racial discrimination.

Phillips said she's disappointed in the response.

A curriculum audit released in 1999, the year Grohe took over as superintendent, found the district was slow to follow certain directives.

Today, all employees must undergo diversity and cultural sensitivity training, district spokeswoman Becky Hanks said.

During the 1989-90 school year, minorities in the school district made up nearly 15 percent of the student population. Today they are about 35 percent.

And while blacks account for more than 10 percent of the district's 26,400 students, they represent about 59 percent of students disciplined since September 2003, according to district security reports.

Body Found In Street: Suspect Arrested in Las Vegas

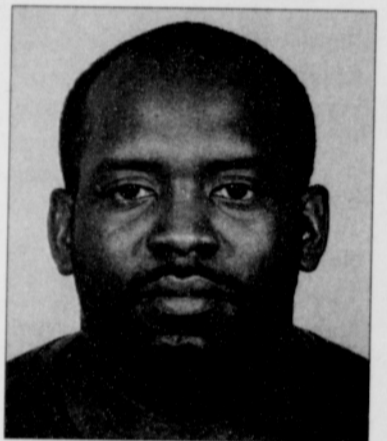
Victim shot to death

PORTLAND — A suspect is under arrest for the shooting death of a Portland man. Police found the body of Lavelle Anthony Mathews (pictured) March 23 in the road at North Albina and Webster streets.

The medical examiner confirmed that the 35-year-old died from a gunshot wound.

Robert Wagner was arrested in Las Vegas on an outstanding warrant. The 25-year-old was being held in Nevada until he could be returned to Oregon.

A possible motive was not released.



Lavelle Mathews

Billion Dollar Reparations Suit

DNA linked plaintiffs to African slaves who suffered atrocities

(AP) — Descendants of slaves filed a \$1 billion lawsuit in New York City against U.S. and British corporations, accusing them of profiting by committing genocide against their ancestors.

Lawyers for the eight plaintiffs said the March 26 complaint was the first slave reparations lawsuit to use DNA to link the plaintiffs to Africans who suffered atrocities during the slave trade.

The suit filed in federal court in Manhattan accuses Lloyd's of London, FleetBoston and R.J. Reynolds of "aiding and abetting the commission of genocide" by allegedly financing and insuring

the ships that delivered slaves to tobacco plantations in the United States.

The defendants "have destroyed our national and ethnic identity," one of the plaintiffs, Deadria Farmer-Paellmann, said at a news conference announcing the suit.

DNA testing has made a "direct connection" between Farmer-Paellmann and the Mende tribe in Sierra Leone, whose people "were kidnapped, tortured and shipped in chains to the United States," the suit said.

Scientific evidence also has linked the other plaintiffs to tribes in Niger and Gambia, the suit said.

Ellen Matthews, a spokeswoman for R.J. Reynolds, said the company had not received a copy of the suit.

In January, a federal judge in Chicago threw out a similar lawsuit brought by descendants of slaves.

'American Idol' Voting Strikes Sour Note

Diva voted out amid accusations of racism

(AP) — Theories flew fast and furious Thursday after the "American Idol" viewer vote went against favorite Jennifer Hudson, ranging from racism to fateful weather to teenage puppy love.

Or maybe America just has a tin ear.

While Hudson and two others singers lavishly praised by the show's judges ended up at the bottom of the heap Wednesday night, contestants who gave marginal performances were top vote-getters.

Hudson, Fantasia Barrino and La Toya London - "The Three Divas," as they've become known - seemed to have the best shot at taking the Fox TV contest.

With the lowest vote tally, Hudson was bumped from the show. Even series host Ryan Seacrest chastised viewers.

A storm that caused a power outage in the Midwest may have been a factor in Hudson's ouster, TV entertainment newsmagazine "Extra" said Thursday.

More than 15,000 people in Hudson's hometown of Chicago were unable to watch the show or dial in Tuesday night, when

the vote turned out to be the closest in the show's three-year history, "Extra" said.

Judge Randy Jackson, who said losing Hudson was "nuts," told "Extra" he thought the outage could have been a

problem but it wasn't enough to alter the outcome. Fox didn't release the viewer vote count this week, but about 24 million votes were recorded last week.

The New York Post reported it was deluged with calls complaining that the voting was racially motivated: Hudson, Barrino and London are black. (The Post is owned by News Corp., which also owns Fox TV.)

George Huff, still in the competition, is black, as was last year's winner, Ruben Studdard. "American Idol," unlike other reality shows featuring competition, is more popular in black homes than white homes.

For the current season, the show was watched in 19 percent of all black households, compared to 15 percent of white households, according to Nielsen Media Research.

Questions of racism also came up in the first season, after talented Tamyra Gray was voted off.



Jennifer Hudson

The Portland Observer
USPS 959-680

Established 1970

4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.,
Portland, OR 97211

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, PUBLISHER:
Charles H. Washington

EDITOR:
Michael Leighton

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER:
Mark Washington

CREATIVE DIRECTOR:
Paul Neufeldt

OFFICE MANAGER:
Kathy Linder

REPORTER:
Jaymee R. Cuti

The Portland Observer welcomes freelance submissions. Manuscripts and photographs should be clearly labeled and will be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed envelope. All created design display ads become the sole property of the newspaper and cannot be used in other publications or personal usage without the written consent of the general manager, unless the client has purchased the composition of such ad. © 1996 THE PORTLAND OBSERVER. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT PERMISSION IS PROHIBITED.

The Portland Observer—Oregon's Oldest Multicultural Publication—is a member of the National Newspaper Association—Founded in 1885, and The National Advertising Representative Amalgamated Publishers, Inc., New York, NY, and The West Coast Black Publishers Association • Serving Portland and Vancouver.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to
Portland Observer PO Box 3137, Portland,
OR 97208

Periodical Postage paid in Portland, OR
Subscriptions are \$60.00 per year

503-288-0033
FAX 503-288-0015

news@portlandobserver.com
subscription@portlandobserver.com

ads@portlandobserver.com
classifieds@portlandobserver.com

Subscribe!

Fill out, Clip out & Send to:

The Portland Observer

Attn: Subscriptions

PO Box 3137, Portland OR 97208

subscriptions are just
\$60 per year

(please include check with this
subscription form)

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: _____