

Attacks kill 44, injure 200 in Shiite slum

By ALEXANDRA ZAVIS
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THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, Iraq

The guarded words of hope had barely been spoken on one side of the Tigris River in Iraq on Sunday before being drowned out by the thunder and terror of new bombings on the other.

The late-afternoon bloodbath, at least 44 dead and 200 wounded, at marketplaces in Sadr City, Baghdad's teeming Shiite Muslim slum, threatened to re-ignite Sunni-Shiite violence that shook Iraq for days after a holy site was bombed last month.

The attacks in Sadr City, quickly sealed off by Mahdi Army militiamen of the radical anti-American Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, caused pandemonium. Residents searched wildly for survivors and ambulances and trucks hauled away charred corpses.

Sirens wailed as ambulances raced to gather the wounded. Smoke billowed into the evening sky and angry young men kicked the decapitated head of the suicide attacker, who appeared to be



An Iraqi firefighter extinguishes the flames from a car bomb explosion in the Shiite district of Sadr City, in Baghdad, Iraq, on Sunday. Two car bombs and four mortar rounds rocked the Shiite slum, killing at least 44 people, police said.

an African, that lay in the street.

The nature of the attack and its use of a suicide bomber pointed to the work of al-Qaida in Iraq, which has said it hoped to start a Shiite-Sunni civil conflict.

Dozens of market stalls and vehicles were destroyed by the explosives, which ripped through the poor neighborhood as residents

shopped for their evening meals.

Police said they defused a third car bomb.

Iraqis feared such an attack was coming, especially after al-Sadr's fighters stormed out the slum to take revenge on Sunni Muslims and their mosques when a bombing destroyed a major Shiite shrine Feb. 22 in Samarra.

Hundreds died in the subsequent days of sectarian violence. Dozens of mosques were destroyed or damaged.

"After Sadr City's reaction to the bombing of our holy shrine in Samarra, we were expecting bombing attacks," said Amer al-Husseini, a black-turbaned cleric and aide to al-Sadr.

Three of Saddam's co-defendants testify for first time in trial

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq

Saddam Hussein's trial entered a new phase Sunday as three of his co-defendants testified for the first time, denying they had any role in the killings and arrests of Shiite Muslims in the 1980s.

All eight defendants are to be brought before the court for direct questioning. The ousted leader was expected to go last, possibly today, though it was up to chief judge Raouf Abdel-Rahman to decide when to call him.

Saddam and the other defendants have spoken up often during the five-month trial, casting doubt on witness testimony or making speeches, but those were isolated outbursts.

The direct questioning by the judge and prosecutors will give the court the chance to try to draw Saddam out on the crux of the trial: How much he knew of and directed the crackdown in the

Shiite town of Dujail, launched in the wake of a 1982 assassination attempt against him.

Saddam and seven former members of his regime are on trial for the deaths of 148 Shiites in the crackdown, as well as the illegal imprisonment and torture of Dujail residents. They face possible execution by hanging if convicted.

On Sunday, three men who were local Dujail officials in Saddam's ruling Baath party stood before the chief judge and testified. Saddam and the other defendants did not appear during the four-hour session.

Mizhar Abdullah Ruwayyid, his father Abdullah Ruwayyid and Ali Dayih Ali were accused of being informants and directing the feared Mukharbat intelligence agency to Dujail residents, some of whom were later killed.

All three admitted to being a part of the Baath Party but accepted no further blame.

The proceedings were adjourned until today.

Four American troops killed by roadside bomb in Afghanistan

Ex-Afghan president escapes attack with burns to hands, face

By RAHIM FAIEZ
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

KABUL, Afghanistan

A roadside bomb killed four U.S. troops passing by in an armored vehicle in eastern Afghanistan on Sunday, the deadliest attack on coalition forces in a month.

In Kabul, a suicide bombing Sunday killed two people and narrowly missed the chief of Afghanistan's upper house of parliament, and he accused Pakistani intelligence of trying to assassinate him.

The two bombings were the latest in a series of militant attacks that appear to be gathering intensity four years after the ouster of the hard-line Taliban regime by a U.S.-led invasion.

The American troops died when their vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device in the Pech Valley in Kunar province as they patrolled a road open to civilian and military traffic, military spokesman Col. Jim Yonts said.

Kunar Gov. Asadullah Wafa said the blast went off as a convoy of six American vehicles was passing at 4:15 p.m.

Yonts accused militants of launching cowardly attacks, plac-



Sibghatullah Mujaddedi, an Afghan politician leading reconciliation efforts with the Taliban militia, shows his bandaged hand to the media after surviving a suicide car bomb attack in Kabul, Afghanistan, on Sunday.

ing bombs and detonating them from a distance. He said that would not deter the U.S.-led coalition from their mission of defeating Taliban and al-Qaida militants and establishing lasting security.

Sunday's bombing raised the death toll of U.S. military personnel in the region to 220 since a U.S.-led offensive toppled the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in late 2001.

It was the deadliest attack since Feb. 13, when a roadside bomb killed four American troops travel-

ing in an armored vehicle in central Uruzgan province.

Also Sunday, a car bombing in the capital targeted Sibghatullah Mujaddedi, a Muslim cleric who briefly served as president in 1992. He now heads the new Meshrano Jirga, or upper house of parliament, and leads a commission encouraging Taliban fighters to reconcile with the government.

Mujaddedi escaped with burns to his hands and face but two bystanders, a girl on her way to school and a man on a motorbike, were killed. Five others were wounded, and the two attackers who drove the explosives-laden station wagon into the convoy died.

"The explosion was very strong. For a while I couldn't see anything. ... I saw a big fire come toward me," the white-bearded Mujaddedi told a news conference a few hours later.

President Hamid Karzai condemned the bombing as an attack on the voice of Afghanistan and clerics of Afghanistan. He did not blame anyone outright but said he had received information two months ago of a plot to attack important personalities in Afghanistan.

Mujaddedi was more forthright, directly accusing Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency for the bombing. He offered no proof.

"We have got information that ISI of Pakistan has launched a plan to kill me," he said.

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