



AP PHOTO

Iraqis pass through debris at the scene of Sunday's twin car bomb attack in Baghdad, Iraq, on Monday.

Six U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq

Insurgents launch bombing attacks

By BRIAN MURPHY
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, Iraq

Insurgents staged a bold daylight assault against a U.S. combat post north of the capital Monday, first striking with a suicide car bombing, then firing on soldiers pinned down in a former Iraqi police station. At least two soldiers were killed and 17 wounded, the military said.

Elsewhere, three U.S. soldiers were killed and two were wounded in a roadside bombing southwest of Baghdad on Monday, the U.S. military said. The military also announced the deaths of three Marines and one soldier since Saturday while conducting combat operations in the western province of Anbar.

Altogether, nine U.S. service members have been reported killed since the beginning of the weekend, six of them on Monday.

The head-on attack north of Baghdad was notable for both its tactics and target. Sunni insurgents have mostly used hit-and-run ambushes, roadside bombs or mortars on U.S. troops and stayed away from direct assaults on fortified military compounds to avoid U.S. firepower.

It also appeared to fit a pattern emerging among the suspected Sunni militants: trying to hit U.S. forces harder outside the capital rather than confront them on the streets during a massive American-led security operation.

But the sweeps have done little so far to ease the city's pain.

Nearly 100 people have died in two days of blasts and sectarian bloodshed in and around Baghdad — most in areas dominated by the majority Shiite Muslims — and Iraqi officials who predicted swift results for the security operation have gone suddenly silent.

"A coordinated attack" is how the U.S. military statement described the raid on the outpost in Tarmiyah, about 30 miles north of Baghdad. It added that a suicide car bombing began the fight, but military authorities declined to give further details.

Witnesses and local authorities offered a fuller picture. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to media and feared reprisals.

Small-town struggles



AP PHOTOS

Top: Joanna Hawthorne, mother of U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Edward Carman, sits at her son's graveside in McKeesport-Versailles Cemetery in McKeesport, Pa., on Feb. 9. Above: Daniel Adams, 5, looks through a box of his father's personal items in the family room of his home in Wexford, Pa., on Feb. 1. His father, Pennsylvania National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Brent Adams, died in Iraq.

Poor areas with low population hit hardest by war

By KIMBERLY HEFLING
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MCKEESPORT, Pa.

Edward "Willie" Carman wanted a ticket out of town, and the Army provided it.

Raised in the projects by a single mother in McKeesport, a blighted, old industrial steel town outside Pittsburgh, the 18-year-old saw the U.S. military as an opportunity.

"I'm not doing it to you, I'm doing it for me," he told his mother, Joanna Hawthorne, after coming home from high school one day and surprising her with the news.

When Carman died in Iraq three years ago at age 27, he had money saved for college, a fiancée and two kids — including a baby son he'd never met. Neighbors in Hawthorne's mobile home park collected \$400 and left it in an envelope in her door.

For a year after his death, Hawthorne took a chair to the cemetery nearly every day, sat next to his grave and talked quietly. Her vigil continues even now; the visits have slowed to once a week, but the pain sticks.

Across the nation, small towns are quietly bearing a disproportionate burden of war. Nearly half of the more than 3,000 U.S. military fatalities in Iraq have come from towns like McKeesport, where fewer than 25,000 people live, according to an analysis by The Associated Press. One in five hailed from hometowns of fewer than 5,000.

Many of the hometowns of the war dead aren't just small, they're poor. The AP analysis found that nearly three-quarters of those killed in Iraq came from towns where the per capita income was below the national average. More than half came from towns where the percentage of people living in poverty topped the national average.

Some are old factory towns like McKeesport, once home to U.S. Steel's National Tube Works, which employed 8,000 people in its heyday. Now, residents' average income is just 60 percent of the national average, and one in eight lives below the federal poverty line.

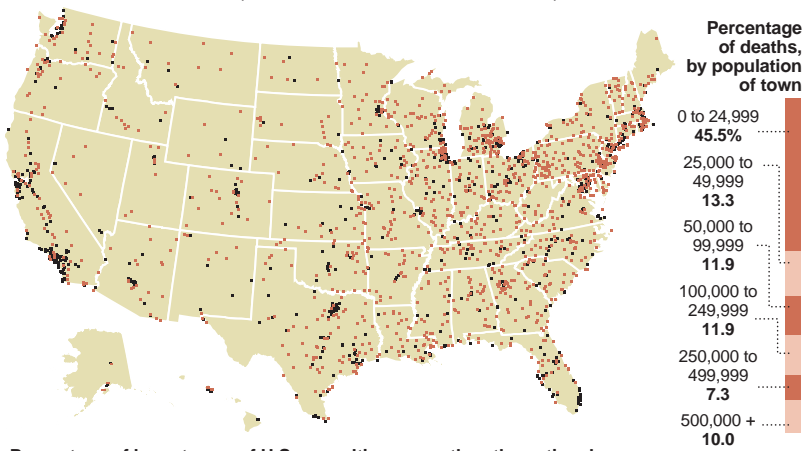
On a per capita basis, states with mostly rural populations have suffered the highest casualties in Iraq. Vermont, South Dakota, Alaska, North Dakota,

Rural America bears burden of the war in Iraq

Nearly half of those killed in Iraq came from towns with a population less than 25,000. Most hometowns of U.S. military casualties are below the national average in income and educational attainment but above the poverty level.

Total deaths per town, as of Feb. 3, 2007

■ Places with less than 25,000 persons ■ Places with more than 25,000 persons



Percentage of hometowns of U.S. casualties worse than the national average

Per capita income 72.6 Poverty rate 55.2 High school graduation rate 49.1

NOTE: Hometown and state information compiled from initial DoD press releases. Data represents identified deaths only and includes seven military civilians. Data for charts reported as of Feb. 3, 2007, of 3,041 casualties in U.S. states and DC. Charts based on 2,848 hometowns or 94 percent of all towns. Puerto Rico is not shown with a total of 19 deaths.

SOURCES: AP research; Department of Defense; Census Bureau Damiko G. Morris, Monika Mathur, John Balestrieri, David Pace • AP

Nebraska, Wyoming, Delaware, Montana, Louisiana and Oregon top the list, the AP found.

There's a basic unfairness about the number of troops dying in Iraq who are from rural areas, said William O'Hare, senior visiting fellow at the University of New Hampshire's Carsey Institute, which examines rural issues.

Diminished opportunities are one factor in higher military enlistment rates in rural areas. From 1997 to 2003, 1.5 million rural workers lost their jobs due to changes in industries like manufacturing that have traditionally employed rural workers, according to the Carsey Institute.

Rural communities are "being asked to pay a bigger price for this military adventure, if I can use that word, than their urban counterparts," O'Hare said.

As a result, in more than a thousand small towns across the country — from Glendive, Mont., to Barnwell, S.C., to Caledonia, Miss., and from Hardwick, Vt., to Clinton, Ohio — friends and families have been left struggling to make sense of a loved one's death in Iraq. It's a struggle that hits with a special intensity in tight-knit, small towns.

"In a small community, even if you

don't know somebody's name you at least know their face, you've seen them before, talked to them maybe," said Chuck Bevington, whose 22-year-old brother Allan, from Beaver Falls, Pa., died in Iraq, after volunteering for a second tour. "A small community feels it a lot tighter because they've had more contact with each other."

Even strangers come up and hug his mother, he said.

Call to duty

Military tradition and patriotism run deep in rural America, and for some the drive to serve goes well beyond economics. Sometimes, the call is something even their parents don't completely understand.

When a Marine recruiter came to Ryan Kovacic's two-story house outside Washington, Pa., off a mountain rural road surrounded by cattle pastures, his father, a Marine veteran of Vietnam, turned to his college student son and said, "You don't really understand what you're getting into."

"Yes, I do," he stubbornly told his father before signing the papers.

Their son was a jokester, easygoing and popular. He loved golf and vacationing in

Myrtle Beach, S.C. But there was a serious side too, and his parents said he believed in serving his country. As a bonus, he thought military service would help him one day get a job with the FBI or CIA.

Before leaving for Iraq, he took his girlfriend to a car dealership along Interstate 79, pointed to a giant American flag flying overhead, and declared, "This is why I joined the Marines."

When his body was brought home, the hearse passed the same flag.

The day of Kovacic's funeral, people lined Route 19, holding signs with his name. Little kids waved flags and men held their hands over their hearts to pay respect to the procession of more than 300 cars. His parents say they've been overwhelmed by the support of the community with tributes and phone calls from his friends and fellow Marines.

In Iraq, they later learned, he used to serenade his buddies with a song his father learned in boot camp and taught him as a boy. His voice choking, Joe Kovacic recalled the words: "You can have your Army khaki, you can have your Navy blue, but here's another fighting man I'll introduce to you."

Among his belongings returned to the family was a tiny worn-out Bible he carried in his pocket.

His mother, Judi, said she didn't watch President Bush's recent address on the war because they try to stay out of the politics of Iraq.

"If God was going to take him at 22, if he didn't take him like he did, how was he going to do it? I feel a lot better losing him this way because there was a lot of meaning behind what he did," his father said.

Economic impact

Death isn't the only burden the war has visited on the nation's small towns.

Entrepreneurs in many small communities have lost their businesses after deploying in the Guard and Reserves, said Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont. More federal dollars are also needed to ensure that returning troops have easy access to veterans health centers, he said.

"It's an issue of fairness that these folks are willing to go over and fight wars and put their lives on the line and really back this country up the way they have ... we owe it to them to live up to our obligation of benefits," Tester said.

Bush compares terror war to American Revolution

By TOM RAUM
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MOUNT VERNON, Va.

President Bush honored the 275th birthday of the nation's first president on Monday, likening George Washington's long struggle that gave birth to a nation to the war against terrorism.

"Today, we're fighting a new war to defend our liberty and our people and our way of life," said Bush, standing in front of Washington's home and above a mostly frozen Potomac River.

"And as we work to advance the cause of freedom around the world, we remember that the father of our country believed

that the freedoms we secured in our revolution were not meant for Americans alone."

Bush chose the national Presidents Day holiday to make his first visit as president to Mount Vernon. He and first lady Laura Bush helped lay a wreath at Washington's tomb, then the president gave a speech from a platform on the bowling green lawn of the estate.

"I feel right at home here. After all, this is the home of the first George W. I thank President Washington for welcoming us today. He doesn't look a day over 275 years old," Bush said to laughter.

Washington was born on Feb. 22, 1732.

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ROOT CAUSE

When the pulp (the soft tissue inside the root canal) becomes inflamed or infected, endodontic (Latin for "inside" the "tooth") treatment is necessary to remove the pulp, replace it with inert material, and seal the tooth. Root-canal treatment may be made necessary by trauma, decay, or a cracked tooth. The goal of the procedure is to save the crown (white outer portion of the tooth). Because the pulp contains nerves and blood vessels, inflammation or infection of the pulp can be particularly painful. Removing the pulp from the non-vital tooth, however, helps to eliminate the root cause of the pain. Root canal treatment should not be confused with the painful condition that makes it necessary. Your restored tooth could last a lifetime, if you continue to care for your teeth and

gums. However, regular checkups are necessary. At CEDAR LANE FAMILY DENTISTRY, we recommend regular checkups, periodic cleaning, and x-rays when needed. Our purpose is to help people reach and commit to the highest level of dental health personally appropriate to them. We're located at 850 Cedar Lane, where we believe regular dental care is one of the best investments you will ever make. We are trained in the most advanced dental methods and take pride in paying full attention to all facets of dentistry. To schedule an appointment, please call 736-7476. Smiles are our business.

P.S. While a tooth's nerve tissue is vital to its growth and development, it plays only a sensory role (feeling hot and cold) once the tooth is fully developed.