

Eight U.S. Soldiers Killed Over Two Days in Iraq

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BAGHDAD, Iraq, May 24 - Eight American soldiers were killed in attacks by insurgents over the past the two days, the military said today, as a renewed wave of violence continued.



Hadi Mizban/Associated Press

U.S. forces secured the area where a bomb-rigged car detonated next to a convoy of American soldiers in eastern Baghdad.

THE REACH OF WAR

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David Abrams.

Also today, the military said that four soldiers assigned to the Marines were killed on Monday when a roadside bomb exploded near their vehicle during combat operations in Haswa, about 25 miles south of Baghdad.

Four soldiers died in two separate attacks in central Baghdad today, and another four were killed south of the capital on Monday.

Two Iraqi civilians were also killed in Baghdad today when a car bomb exploded near a police station.

Today's attacks came after at least 33 people were killed on Monday in car bomb blasts aimed at Iraqi Shiites in what appeared to be the latest attempt to exploit the sectarian divisions that have tormented the country.

Three United States soldiers with a Task Force Baghdad convoy were killed when a car bomb exploded at about 1:30 p.m. today in the central part of the city, a military spokesman said.

About an hour later, in the same area of Baghdad, gunmen shot and killed an American soldier at an observation post. The soldier later died from his wounds, said the spokesman with Task Force Baghdad, Sgt. First Class

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The two Iraqi civilians died when insurgents attacked a police patrol in southeast Baghdad near the Alwiyah police station, an officer with the Interior Ministry said. Seven civilians and a policeman were wounded.

The attack took place outside a school for girls, but the ministry officer said it was clear that the target was the police patrol.

All told on Monday, attacks across Iraq killed at least 43 people, including Waiel al-Rubaie, a senior aide in Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari's administration, and his driver, who were shot to death in the Mansour district of Baghdad. The American military said three American soldiers were also killed in the northern city of Mosul on Sunday.

Insurgents have long sought to play on the deeply ingrained fears and prejudices between Sunni Arabs, a minority that once ruled the country, and the Shiites and Kurds who now dominate the government.

In Baghdad on Monday, a Shiite and a Kurd were expected to be appointed to the committee drafting the new constitution, The Associated Press reported. Members of the National Assembly chose a Shiite cleric, Hummam Hammoudi, to lead the committee. His deputy is expected to be Fouad Massoum, a Kurd.

Political leaders fear that the insurgents have intensified their campaign to drive a wedge between Sunnis and Shiites and that they are trying to ignite a civil war.

Last month, Shiite leaders accused Sunnis of a mass killing of Shiites in Madaen, south of Baghdad, and Sunni leaders have accused the largest Shiite militia force of complicity in the killing of Sunni clerics.

The accusations have alarmed even Iraqi religious leaders known for militancy. On Sunday, the rebel Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr vowed to work for a "peaceful" fix to sectarian strife, and a leading Sunni party that claims ties to the insurgency, the Iraqi Islamic Party, issued a statement on Monday condemning "terrorist works" in Madaen and other Shiite areas.

The deadliest attack on Monday struck a Shiite neighborhood in the northern city of Tal Afar near the Syrian border. A pair of suicide car bombers tried to kill a community leader, a Shiite with close ties to Kurdish leaders, but they instead killed at least 15 people and wounded 20 others, Khasro Goran, the deputy governor of Nineveh Province, said in a telephone interview.

Earlier on Monday, a car bomb exploded outside a popular and crowded restaurant near the mostly Shiite Sadr City district in Baghdad, killing at least 8 people and wounding 89 at the end of a busy lunch hour.

On Monday evening, a car bomb exploded outside a Shiite mosque in Mahmudiya, a restive and dangerous town south of Baghdad, killing at least 10 and wounding 15 more. Many victims were children, an Interior Ministry official said.

Five people were also killed in Tuz Khurmatu, about 120 miles north of Baghdad, when insurgents attacked a convoy carrying members of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the party that controls the eastern and southern reaches of the Kurdish territories, party officials said.

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