

January 28, 2004

CASUALTIES

Six G.I.'s and 7 Iraqis Die in Spike of Violence

By EDWARD WONG

BAGHDAD, Iraq, Jan. 27 — Six American soldiers were killed and four were wounded, at least one critically, when homemade bombs exploded in two separate roadside attacks on Tuesday in central Iraq, military officials said. An Iraqi civilian was killed and several others were hurt in one of the bombings.

Also on Tuesday, a gunman opened fire on two cars carrying Cable News Network workers south of Baghdad, killing two Iraqi employees and slightly wounding a cameraman, according to a military spokesman and a CNN statement.

[Shortly after dawn on Wednesday, a suspected car bomb exploded outside the Shaheen Hotel in central Baghdad, destroying the building, Reuters reported. An Iraqi police officer said the blast killed three people and destroyed a police post, Agence France-Presse reported. The bombing comes a little more than a week after a car bomb blew up outside the American headquarters in Baghdad, killing 25 people.]

The bursts of violence came on a day when Kofi Annan, secretary general of the United Nations, announced that he would send a team to assess the viability of holding direct elections here in the next several months, provided that security and other practical arrangements were in place for that team.

Dan Senor, a spokesman for the Coalition Provisional Authority, said in a news conference here that the occupation authority was already working with some security experts the United Nations had sent to Iraq to arrange security.

The first bomb attack took place in Khaldiya, 60 miles west of Baghdad, at 12:55 p.m. The bomb killed three American soldiers and critically wounded another. One Iraqi civilian was killed, and several others were wounded. Soldiers arriving to help the wounded came under small-arms fire, said Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt, a spokesman for the occupation forces.

Khaldiya lies in the so-called Sunni triangle, between the trouble spots of Falluja and Ramadi, and has been the scene of other attacks.

A few hours later, the two CNN workers were killed as they were returning to Baghdad from nearby Hilla. Their convoy was ambushed on the outskirts of town, near a stretch of road where two cars full of Spanish intelligence agents in plainclothes were attacked in late November.

The two CNN cars were approached from behind by a rust-colored Opel, according to the statement from CNN. A gunman with an AK-47 stood up through the sunroof and opened fire on one of the cars. The two people shot dead were Duraid Isa Mohammed, an interpreter and producer, and Yasir Khatab, a driver.

Scott McWhinnie, a cameraman in the other car, was grazed in the head by a bullet.

In the second bombing on Tuesday, a roadside bomb exploded at 8 p.m. near Iskandiriya, 25 miles south of Baghdad, killing three American soldiers and wounding three others, The Associated Press reported.

An Iraqi policeman and a guerrilla fighter were killed when a police station came under attack in Haditha, 155 miles west of Baghdad, Agence France-Presse reported.