

## US Raids Hit Suspected Iraqi Militias

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, right, and Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, left, arrive for their meeting in Tehran on Wednesday Aug. 8, 2007. Al-Maliki arrived in Iran on Wednesday for talks expected to focus on bilateral relations and overcoming "terrorism challenges" in his war-torn nation. An unidentified translator is in center. (AP Photo/Hasan Sarbakhshian) [Click here to enlarge.](#)

U.S. aircraft and soldiers attacked Shiite militia bomb makers accused of links to Iran in raids Wednesday that coincided with a visit to Tehran by Iraq's prime minister. The U.S. military said 32 suspected militants were killed and 12 were captured. The strike in Sadr City - a major Shiite enclave in Baghdad - sought to target a ring believed to be smuggling armor-piercing roadside bombs from Iran. The precision-crafted explosives have become a growing threat to American troops, and the Pentagon has struggled to find ways to protect vehicles against their deadly power. The sweep into Sadr City also sent a strong message that U.S. forces plan no letup on suspected Shiite militia cells despite risks of upsetting the Shiite-led government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and its efforts at closer cooperation with Shiite heavyweight Iran. Tehran has denied support for the violence in Iraq. Al-Maliki, on a state visit seeking both security cooperation and more electricity from his neighbor, had no immediate comment on the raids. The U.S. military said 32 suspected militiamen were killed and 12 captured. But Iraqi police and witnesses said the raids killed nine civilians, including two women, and wounded six others, and made no mention of militants. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they feared reprisals. The reason for the discrepancies in the U.S. military and local accounts was not immediately clear. Across Baghdad, meanwhile, devout Shiites massed for a huge annual pilgrimage Thursday. Police clamped on tight security to shield them from possible attacks from Sunni insurgents working to provoke an all-out civil war between Iraq's main Muslim groups. The American push into Sadr City highlighted the growing complications as more Shiite factions break apart and carve out their own agendas. The main target was fighters from a breakaway faction of the powerful Mahdi Army, which appears to be fracturing as its leader, radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, loses his tight grip. The splinter group served as a liaison between Iraqi fighters and Iran's elite Quds Force, the U.S. military said. U.S. and Iraqi forces came under sporadic small-arms fire as they moved into Sadr City, a teeming grid of stores and shops in northeastern Baghdad. Troops killed two armed men believed to be lookouts and then detained 12 militia fighters, the U.S. military said. U.S. helicopters and warplanes then struck after spotting a large group of armed men on foot who were trying to attack the American ground forces. An estimated 30 militants were killed in the air attack, the U.S. military said. Afterward, crying neighborhood women shrouded in black accused the Americans of attacking civilians. The No. 2 U.S. commander, Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno, has stepped up accusations against Iran in recent days, saying rogue Shiite militants aided by Tehran carried out 73 percent of the attacks that killed or wounded American troops in Baghdad in July. The sophisticated bombs - which send a blast of superheated molten metal - accounted for a third of U.S. combat deaths in July, according to the military. The renewed focus on Iranian-backed militias comes even as the U.S. military has claimed some success in combating the other major source of attacks in Iraq - Sunni insurgents linked to al Qaida in Iraq. U.S. forces have made important strides by enlisting the help of Sunni tribal leaders and others angered by al-Qaida in Iraq's tactics, such as taking control of lucrative smuggling routes and attacking civilians. In the western Anbar province - once a virtual fiefdom of al-Qaida - attacks against U.S. forces have sharply declined, the military reports. In Fallujah, for example, attacks were down to below 30 in June compared with more than 90 as recently as May, according to military figures cited in a draft report for the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies by Anthony Cordesman, a former Pentagon analyst. Yet fear of possible Sunni attacks were behind the strict security measures in Baghdad as pilgrims gathered. A curfew was in effect until early Saturday and soldiers were deployed about 100 yards apart on streets in western Baghdad. Traffic was barred by barbed wire and warning signs. By Wednesday morning, some 1,500 pilgrims had already passed through one of several checkpoints into the area around a shrine in the northern Baghdad area of Kazimiyah where the pilgrims are headed, according to an Iraqi police lieutenant who identified himself only as Fadil, because of security concerns. The march marks the anniversary of the death of one of Shiite Islam's main saints in the 8th century. Women wearing black abayas in the searing heat carried plastic bags full of bread and other food, and drank from plastic water bottles as they walked through otherwise-empty streets toward the shrine. Iraqi soldiers held cigarettes between their teeth as they patted down men wearing traditional Arab robes at checkpoints. "Thank God security is OK so far - I put it all in God's hands," said Muhammed Jabar, 47, who had walked to Kazimiyah on Wednesday from a nearby area. While the streets of Baghdad were relatively calm because of the driving ban, violence struck elsewhere. The U.S. military said one U.S. soldier died and four others were wounded Tuesday by a roadside bombing in western Baghdad. Their identities had not been released. At least 20 U.S. soldiers have been killed this month. In southern Iraq, a British soldier was killed by small arms fire in Basra late Tuesday, the British Defense Ministry said. Gunmen also targeted a former mayor of the Shiite holy city of Najaf, the latest in a series of assassination attempts against clerics, academics and security officials there. The U.S. military said American and Iraqi troops had detained five other Shiite militia fighters in the southwestern Baghdad neighborhood of Amil on Monday. And U.S. soldiers south of the capital detained 10 Shiite militants who were allegedly responsible for rocket attacks against an American forward operating base. At al-Maliki's meetings in Tehran - his second in less than a year - he focused on ways to speed up signed agreements between the two countries on providing electricity, along with oil and gas exploration. At the meetings with Iranian Vice President Parviz Davoodi, Iran said it would build a power station in Sadr City and provide Iraq with more electricity and other fuel. Iraq, which like Iran is majority Shiite, has managed a difficult balancing act between Tehran and Washington since the U.S.-led invasion in 2003, trying to maintain good relations with its powerful neighbor while not angering the Americans. Al-Maliki was to hold talks later with Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

## About the Author

From [www.blueridgenow.com](http://www.blueridgenow.com):

The official online presence of the Calgary Food Not Bombs, as well as Edmonton Food Not Bombs and their forums.

Sacramento Food Not Bombs. Thousands of free meals are served each week by Food Not Bombs in an effort to protest homelessness, starvation, and military.

Site of the Berkeley, California chapter with background and contact.

Info and times for the activities of this branch of food not bombs in New York City.

MySpace profile for Austin Food Not Bombs West with pictures, videos, personal blog, interests, information.

Flickr is almost certainly the best online photo management and sharing application in the world. Show off your favorite photos to the world, securely.

Food Not Bombs is an international network of volunteers who serve free hot vegetarian food. Food Not Bombs in the United States, Europe, and Australia.

Welcome to the Baltimore Food Not Bombs chapter home page! Food Not Bombs is a worldwide radical movement dedicated to redistributing.

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