

Iraq

-- During the course of the Iraqi conflict, the media captured the world's attention by giving a play by play account of the events. Were they always correct? Also, Bectal wins Iraqi reconstruction contract. --

BACKGROUND:

One feature of the war in Iraq was the speed and immediacy with which many events were reported by the media. Some of these turned out to be not quite what they seemed, others are still surrounded by confusion. Was this the fog of war, effects-based warfare, propaganda, or error?

Scuds

Coalition account:

On day one of the war, 20 March, military spokesmen for the US and UK announce that "Scud-type" missiles have been fired into Kuwait. This was significant because



Journalists complained official briefings were not as informative as they might have been

Iraq was banned from having Scuds or other missiles of a similar range under UN resolutions.

Clarification: Three days later US General Stanley McChrystal reports: "So far there have been no Scuds launched."

Umm Qasr falls

Coalition account: The fall of Umm Qasr, an Iraqi town and port near the border with Kuwait, is announced and reported several times in the first days of the war - the first of these on 20 March. On 21 March Admiral Michael Boyce, UK chief of defense staff, and Donald Rumsfeld, US defense secretary, report that the town has fallen to coalition forces.

Other reports: Various media outlets report heavy fighting in Umm Qasr on 22 and 23 March.

Basra uprising

UK military's account: On the evening of 25 March British military intelligence officials report a "popular civilian uprising" in Basra. Major General Peter Wall, British Chief of Staff at Allied Central Command in Qatar, confirms that it appears an uprising has taken place, but that it is in its infancy and British troops are "keen to exploit its potential". The officials say Iraqi troops in the city turned mortar fire on their own civilians in an attempt to crush the unrest.



Mourning the dead of the Shula market bombing

British journalist Richard Gaisford, who is with the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards just outside

Basra, says British troops are bombarding the mortar positions in an effort to support the uprising.

Other reports: Also on 25 March Arabic television stations report no sign of an uprising and that the city is quiet. Iraqi officials deny reports of an uprising, calling them "hallucinations".

Further UK account: On 26 March, deputy commander of British forces Major-General Peter Wall says the uprising is "just the sort of encouraging indication we have been looking for". But he adds: "To avoid any excessive optimism at this stage I should say we don't have any absolutely clear indication of the scale and scope of this uprising or exactly what has engendered it."

Conclusion: There is still no independent verification that an uprising occurred in Basra.

Tank column

Initial reports: On the evening of 26 March reports emerge that a column of 120 Iraqi tanks and armored vehicles are heading south out of

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Basra. Major Mick Green, of the UK's 40 Commando, is quoted by the Mirror newspaper as saying: "We have no idea why this column has come out at the moment. Their intentions or motives are totally unclear but they have adopted an offensive posture and do not want to surrender, so we have attacked them."

Later reports: Newspapers and news bulletins the next morning carry accounts of fierce fighting and a large battle.

Clarification: Later on 27 March, a British military official is quoted as saying: "It was 14-0." This is understood to have meant that the Iraqi column consisted of only 14 vehicles. The official put the initial reports down to "the fog of war" and an erroneous radar signal.

Market explosions

On 26 March an explosion at a market in Baghdad's Shaab district kills at least 14 civilians. The BBC's Andrew Gilligan visits the scene.

"What seemed to be two missiles landed in a busy shopping parade. The nearest military building, civil defense headquarters, is I have to say at least quarter of a mile away," he reports. The cause of the blast is still disputed.

Iraqi account: Following the first blast, at Shaab, Iraq claims that coalition forces are targeting Iraqi civilians.

US account: Initial briefings from US officials say coalition aircraft targeted nine Iraqi missiles and launchers in Baghdad during 26 March. Officials say Iraqis have placed the missiles in a residential area less than 100 meters (300 feet) from homes. Later in the day, the Pentagon insists that they did not target the market area in Baghdad. Major General Stanley McChrystal of the US joint staff says he did not know whether the explosions were caused by a stray US weapon or perhaps Iraqi anti-aircraft missiles that fell back to earth.

A US military spokesman at coalition Central Command says: "Our early intelligence report provides no conclusive evidence that we have caused the damage in the civilian marketplace. One possibility and high probability

is that it was caused from the fallout from the regime's anti-aircraft fire."

Other reports: The BBC's Andrew Gilligan says that explanation is "unlikely because we simply haven't heard any anti-aircraft fire in the city for the past four days".

On 29 March, an explosion at a market in the Shula district of Baghdad kills more than 50 civilians.

US account: A US Central Command spokesman in Qatar suggests the likely cause was Iraqi fire. One issue likely to be examined in both market bombings, the New York Times reports, is the relatively small size of the craters, in the case of the attack at Shula they were closer to the kind associated with mortars, artillery shells or small bombs, than to the kind of craters commonly caused by American bombs or missiles in Baghdad.

Other reports: The British Independent newspaper reports on 2 April that its correspondent in Baghdad, Robert Fisk, has found a 30-centimetre-long piece of shrapnel at the site of the Shula bombing showing the serial number of the bomb. The newspaper says that the number identifies the cause of the explosion as a US anti-radar missile manufactured in Texas by the Raytheon company and sold to the US navy.

UK Government account: On 2 April UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw says of the first bombing, in the Shaab district: "It is increasingly probable that this was the result of Iraqi - not coalition - action."

On 3 April the UK Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon says that there is no evidence that the market bombings were caused by coalition missiles other than evidence provided by the Iraqi regime. He says that there are Western intelligence reports that Iraqi officials had "cleared up" the site of the Shula bombing "to disguise their own responsibility for what took place".

Conclusion: Coalition officials say both bombings are still under investigation.

Executions

UK account: At a press conference on 27 March

with the US president at Camp David, UK Prime Minister Tony Blair says that Iraq has executed two British soldiers whose bodies were shown on Arabic television.

"If anyone needed any further evidence of the depravity of Saddam's regime, this atrocity provides it," he says. "It is yet one more flagrant breach of all the proper conventions of war."

Iraqi denial: Iraqi Information Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf says that Blair has "lied to the public" about the soldiers. "We haven't executed anyone."

Later reports: The British prime minister's spokesman later said that there was no "absolute evidence" that the UK servicemen had been executed.

Chemical weapons find

On 27 March, George W Bush says that US forces have destroyed a camp in northern Iraq belonging to Ansar al-Islam. Washington's assertion that there was a link between Osama Bin Laden's al-Qaeda network and the Baghdad regime rest mainly on the alleged links between Ansar al-Islam and al-Qaeda. US officials have consistently maintained that the discovery of the poison ricin in London was linked to this camp. UK officials have denied this.

US account: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard Myers says on 30 March: "We attacked and now have gone in on the ground into the site where Ansar al-Islam and al-Qaeda had been working on poisons. We think that's probably where the ricin found in London came from."

Other reports: In London on March 31 two newspapers, the Mirror and the Sun report that the American finds at the Ansar al-Islam site offers proof that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction. The Sun argues that this justifies the war.

Later US account: On 1 April US Brigadier General Vincent Brooks says coalition troops are yet to find any banned weapons in Iraq. Donald Rumsfeld insists Iraqi weapons of mass destruction will be found in areas in and around Baghdad and Tikrit.

Capture of Iraqi general

British account: On 30 March British forces involved in clashes in Basra say they have captured an Iraqi general. UK Group Captain Al Lockwood says the general is being asked to cooperate with UK forces in the planning operations against Iraqi resistance in Basra.

Other reports: Qatari television network al-Jazeera interviews Lieutenant General Walid Hamid Tawfiq, an Iraqi commander in southern Iraq. He insists that no general has been taken prisoner by the British.

UK retraction: The UK Ministry of Defense retracts earlier claims on the capture of a general. It is believed that a captured officer was mistaken for a general.

Checkpoint deaths

Late on 31 March, US troops open fire on a civilian van that fails to stop at a checkpoint. Seven Iraqi women and children are killed, according to US officials.

US account: US officials say the driver of the car failed to stop after warning shots were fired over the car and then at its engine. Soldiers fired at the passenger cabin "as a last resort". US soldiers at checkpoints were said to be jumpy after a suicide attack at a checkpoint had killed four servicemen. Pentagon officials insist that the correct procedures were followed, and that soldiers had acted in "the appropriate way".

Other reports: William Branigin, a reporter with the Washington Post embedded with the US Third Infantry, witnesses the shooting and has a different account. He says that 10 people were killed, and no warning shots were fired. He reports that after the shooting Captain Ronny Johnson, the commander at the checkpoint, yelled at his platoon commander: "You just [expletive] killed a family because you didn't fire a warning shot soon enough!" US forces, according to William Branigin, offered the survivors of the incident financial compensation.

Cluster bombs

Iraqi account: Officials in the Iraqi capital say

that US forces have been dropping cluster bombs on civilian areas in Iraq. First reports of the use of cluster bombs in the war appear in the Western media on 3 April.

Coalition denial: US and British officials deny the use of cluster munitions. British military spokesman Colonel Chris Vernon said: "We are not using cluster munitions, for obvious collateral damage reasons, in and around Basra."

Later UK account: A military official in London tells BBC News Online: "We have used them elsewhere." He said they were an effective weapon of warfare, for example to target a convoy of military vehicles, but were only used in the open far from built up areas. UK Defense Secretary Geoff Hoon defends the use of cluster bombs in Iraq on 4 April, saying they are legal and not using them would put British soldiers at greater risk.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2929411.stm

STORY:

Bechtel Corp., a politically active corporation with wide experience overseas, has won a competition to help rebuild Iraq under a contract that could grow to \$680 million. The San Francisco construction and engineering company will receive \$34.6 million to start work under Thursday's award, but could earn the larger figure over 18 months if Congress approves the funds. The company has wide experience working overseas, with 47,000 employees on 900 projects in nearly 60 countries.

Several Democratic lawmakers have criticized the fast-track bidding process that allowed only a few experienced companies to submit proposals. The U.S. Agency for International Development has controlled the bidding, saying speed was essential to meet Iraq's pressing postwar needs.

The contract covers rehabilitation of the power, water and sewage systems, rehabilitation or repair of airport facilities and dredging, repair and upgrading of the Umm Qasr seaport in cooperation with other contractors. Bechtel also may have a role in repair and reconstruction of

hospitals, schools, selected government ministry buildings, irrigation facilities and transportation.

Other companies invited to bid were Parsons Corp.; Fluor Corp.; Louis Berger Group Inc.; and Washington Group International Inc. A subsidiary of Halliburton Co., which was formerly run by Vice President Dick Cheney, was invited to bid but decided to seek work as a subcontractor.

Bechtel rose from a family business into a privately held international engineering powerhouse. Its executives have included former Secretary of State George Shultz and ex-Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger. The Bechtel Group and its employees have been among the biggest political givers in the general contracting industry, according to an analysis by the Center for Responsive Politics, a nonpartisan Washington-based group that tracks campaign finance. The company and its workers contributed at least \$277,050 to federal candidates and party committees in the last election cycle, about 57 percent to Democrats and 43 percent to Republicans, the center found. Bechtel gave at least \$166,000 to national Republican Party committees, center figures show.

USAID said Bechtel probably would hire subcontractors for many of the projects.

On the Net: Bechtel site: <http://www.bechtel.com/>

SIGNIFICANCE:

The president lowered recently intense rhetoric against Iraq's neighbor to the west. Tensions between the United States and Syria escalated after reports surfaced that members of Saddam's deposed government had crossed the border to flee the U.S.-led war.

U.S. officials have exerted intense pressure on the Syrians, demanding that any haven be closed and telling Damascus that diplomatic or economic sanctions could result if not. Syria had denied taking in senior Iraqis or providing other aid. But the American charges have raised misgivings in the region and elsewhere that Syria could be next in Bush's sights as a military target.

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY / WHO YOU NEED TO KNOW:**April 21, 753 BC*****ROME FOUNDED:******Romulus and Remus***

According to tradition, on April 21, 753 B.C., Romulus and his twin brother, Remus, found Rome on the site where they were suckled by a she-wolf as orphaned infants. Actually, the Romulus and Remus myth originated sometime in the fourth century B.C., and the exact date of Rome's founding was set by the Roman scholar Marcus Terentius Varro in the first century B.C.

According to the legend, Romulus and Remus were the sons of Rhea Silvia, the daughter of King Numitor of Alba Longa. Alba Longa was a mythical city located in the Alban Hills southeast of what would become Rome. Before the birth of the twins, Numitor was deposed by his younger brother Amulius, who forced Rhea to become a vestal virgin so that she would not give birth to rival claimants to his title. However, Rhea was impregnated by the war god Mars and gave birth to Romulus and Remus. Amulius ordered the infants drowned in the Tiber, but they survived and washed ashore at the foot of the Palatine hill, where they were suckled by a she-wolf until they were found by the shepherd Faustulus.

Reared by Faustulus and his wife, the twins later became leaders of a band of young shepherd warriors. After learning their true identity, they attacked Alba Longa, killed the wicked Amulius, and restored their grandfather to the throne. The twins then decided to found a town on the site where they had been saved as infants. They soon became involved in a petty quarrel, however, and Remus was slain by his brother. Romulus then became ruler of the settlement, which was named "Rome" after him.

To populate his town, Romulus offered asylum to fugitives and exiles. Rome lacked

women, however, so Romulus invited the neighboring Sabines to a festival and abducted their women. A war then ensued, but the Sabine women intervened to prevent the Sabine men from seizing Rome. A peace treaty was drawn up, and the communities merged under the joint rule of Romulus and the Sabine king, Titus Tatius. Tatius' early death, perhaps perpetrated by Romulus, left the Roman as the sole king again. After a long and successful rule, Romulus died under obscure circumstances. Many Romans believed he was changed into a god and worshipped him as the deity Quirinus. After Romulus, there were six more kings of Rome, the last three believed to be Etruscans. Around 509 B.C., the Roman republic was established.

Another Roman foundation legend, which has its origins in ancient Greece, tells of how the mythical Trojan Aeneas founded Lavinium and started a dynasty that would lead to the birth of Romulus and Remus several centuries later. In the *Iliad*, an epic Greek poem probably composed by Homer in the eighth century B.C., Aeneas was the only major Trojan hero to survive the Greek destruction of Troy. A passage told of how he and his descendants would rule the Trojans, but since there was no record of any such dynasty in Troy, Greek scholars proposed that Aeneas and his followers relocated.

In the fifth century B.C., a few Greek historians speculated that Aeneas settled at Rome, which was then still a small city-state. In the fourth century B.C., Rome began to expand within the Italian peninsula, and Romans, coming into greater contact with the Greeks, embraced the suggestion that Aeneas had a role in the foundation of their great city. In the first century B.C., the Roman poet Virgil developed the Aeneas myth in his epic poem the *Aeneid*, which told of Aeneas' journey to Rome. Augustus, the first Roman emperor and emperor during Virgil's time, and Julius Caesar, his great-uncle and predecessor as Roman ruler, were said to be descended from Aeneas.

Contributed by: www.thehistorychannel.com

ENTERTAINMENT:

Love Wins MCI Heritage



(AP) Davis Love III chipped in on the final hole to force a playoff, then hit the flagstick with his approach on the fourth extra hole to defeat Woody Austin and win his fifth MCI Heritage on Sunday. If anyone

needed proof of Love's mastery over Harbour Town Golf Links, they got it here.

Trailing by a stroke on the final hole, Love rolled in a wedge from 66 feet away to tie for the lead at 13-under 271. Then, after watching Austin miss makable putts for the victory on the second and third extra holes, Love struck a 6-iron that bounced off the pin and settled about 3 feet away.

Love lined up the putt, took one practice swing and dropped it in, to the blares of boat horns in Callibogue Sound. Love, who won the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am and The Players Championship, joins Tiger Woods and Masters winner Mike Weir as three-time champions on tour this season.

ENTERTAINMENT:

Hall "Sorry" for "Bull" Busting

About that Tim Robbins brush-back pitch? The baseball Hall of Fame is sorry. Sort of. A week after spiking an anniversary celebration of the minor-league comedy *Bull Durham* due to Robbins and costar Susan Sarandon's public antiwar stance, the hall president has apologized.

For not canceling the event in person. What Petroskey did was Fed Ex a letter to Robbins and Sarandon--costars off screen, as well as on--informing the couple that their services were no longer required at the hall for a planned feting of *Bull Durham*, scheduled for April 26-27. Petroskey wrote he was calling off the event

because the pair's propensity for marching in peace rallies and speaking out about the war in Iraq could "ultimately could put our troops in even



more danger. As an institution, we stand behind our president and our troops in this conflict.

Longtime unmarrieds Robbins, 44, and Sarandon, 56, hooked up on the set of *Bull Durham*, writer-director Ron Shelton's 1988 tale of a broken-down catcher (Kevin Costner), the fan (Sarandon) he falls for, and the rookie pitcher (Robbins) he grooms. Shelton and costar Robert Wuhl were to have participated in the Hall ceremony, along with Robbins and Sarandon--the better to mark *Bull's* 15th birthday.

For the last week, Robbins has made it perfectly clear what he thought of Petroskey's curveball. "As an American and as a baseball fan, I was dismayed to read your letter," Robbins wrote in an open letter of his own, published last week. "I had been unaware that baseball was a Republican sport. I reject your suggestion that one must be silent in times of war."

On Tuesday, Robbins talked baseball and censorship in a luncheon address at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. "A chill wind is blowing in this nation," Robbins said. "Every day the airwaves are filled with warnings, veiled and unveiled threats."

In freezing out Robbins and Sarandon, Petroskey got some invective spewed his way, too. Baseball writer Roger Kahn, author of the Brooklyn Dodgers ode *The Boys of Summer*, canceled his own scheduled hall appearance, set for August, in protest. Robbins and Sarandon's *Bull* teammates, including Costner (a Republican himself), came to their defense, as well.

On Friday, Robbins said Petroskey's "actions resulted in a bipartisan, nationwide affirmation of free speech and the First Amendment, he has inadvertently done us all a favor." It was not known if the Hall intended to reschedule a *Bull Durham* event.

FEATURE:*AID FOR IRAQ*

As part of the U.S. government's contingency planning for Iraq, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is prepared to mobilize significant development resources and technical assistance. As posted in a press briefing, USAID assistance will:

Restore Economically Critical

Infrastructure: Reconstruction assistance will rehabilitate critical infrastructure to help maintain stability, ensure the delivery of essential services, and facilitate economic recovery. Iraq's roads and ports will be rehabilitated to meet the needs of citizens and ease transportation of humanitarian assistance, as well as commercial imports and exports. Potable water and sanitation services will be reestablished to prevent disease. Assistance also will restore the power supply to health and educational facilities, water supply facilities, and infrastructure that contribute to the local economy and employment generation.

Support Essential Health and Education

Services: Assistance will restore basic healthcare services to vulnerable populations and focus on strengthening the national education system. Programming will include the delivery of essential drugs, equipment, and supplies to health facilities, and will assist in health and disease assessment. Health assistance also will supply health information and education to the public, build the management capacity of Iraqi counterparts, and promote fair and open access to health services. Education assistance will increase access to primary and secondary public education for Iraqi children, promote retention of students in the classroom, strengthen school administration, and develop re-entry programs for youth.

Expand Economic Opportunity:

Reconstruction assistance will promote a competitive private sector, generate employment opportunities, and improve agricultural productivity. Activities will include extending credit to small and micro-enterprise businesses;

developing local, regional and international business networks; and providing workforce development and training. Agricultural assistance will supply agricultural inputs for the spring and winter planting season, address livestock and poultry diseases and farmers will be trained to use modern agricultural technologies to enhance profitability and competitiveness.

Improve Efficiency and Accountability of Government: Reconstruction assistance will foster social and political stability by helping meet citizens' basic needs within their communities. Programming will provide Iraqis with the opportunity to participate in decision-making. Technical assistance will strengthen the capacities of local administrations to manage and deliver services such as potable water, education, and healthcare. Programming will support the growth of local and national nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations. Technical assistance will also support the preparation and implementation of a legal framework for decentralized government.

Since January 31st eight contracting activities have been undertaken by USAID. Two contracts, one for personnel support and the other for seaport administration, have been awarded, and six additional contracts are pending. This is only a partial list of the reconstruction projects envisaged for Iraq, and does not include projects which may be undertaken by other U.S. agencies and departments and other governments. These are contingency contracts which will only be implemented when the work is required.

In addition, the U.S. government will continue to work through partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international relief agencies, and U.S. universities. USAID values the hands-on approach of these organizations' community development programs and expects to see a substantial NGO and international relief agency role in Iraq. Reconstruction efforts will also include contacts and partnerships between Iraqi and U.S. educational institutions.

Quote of the Week:

There is method in man's wickedness;
It grows up by degrees.
-Beaumont and Fletcher, *King and No King*

Fact of the Week:

Wearing headphones for just an hour will increase the bacteria in your ear by 700 times.

Word of the Week:

Proem (pro'em) n. Preface; introduction; preliminary observations to a book or writing.

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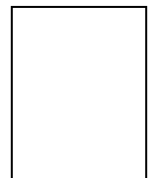
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