

Chronology of Events in Iraq, April 2004*

April 1

Iraqi police fire on protesters in Basra. (Associated Press / AP)

Iraqi security forces in Basra fired on protesters demanding jobs as policemen, killing one demonstrator and wounding two others, officials said. The clash occurred outside the local Customs building in Basra.

Gunmen abduct Iraqi policeman in attack near Kirkuk. (Agence France-Press / AFP)

Gunmen abducted an Iraqi policeman and shot and wounded a colleague in an unprecedented incident at a checkpoint near Kirkuk, a senior paramilitary officer said. The pre-dawn attack took place in Suleiman Bek, 90 kilometers south of Kirkuk, when eight gunmen opened fire on an Iraqi police checkpoint, he said.

Iraq starts issuing ID cards for the displaced. (Iraqi newspaper *Al-Adalah*)

Muhammad Jasim Khudayr, Iraqi minister of displaced persons and expatriates said that identification documents are being issued instead of the civil status ID and accommodation ID to displaced or exiled individuals, who were forced to leave the country and whose Iraqi citizenship was revoked for political reasons. Arrangements are also being made, in coordination with the trade and interior ministries, to provide the expatriates and displaced persons with the ration cards that are issued to Iraqi citizens.

Coalition forces order evacuation of displaced Kurds. (Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party newspaper *Khabat*)

The Dibs Administrative District has been trying recently to facilitate the return of those families and offer them assistance. In the past two weeks, it has settled 70 families in a camp near the Dibs-Kirkuk checkpoint, and has provided each family with a tent. However, the coalition forces have recently demanded through the administrative district office that these families should leave the area and return to wherever they had come from.

Police commander in Kufa city shot dead. (Associated Press / AP)

Gunmen shot and killed a police commander in the southern city of Kufa and seriously wounded his driver in the latest attack on Iraq's security forces, a police officer said. Four gunmen in a gray Oldsmobile killed Lt. Col. Saeed al-Jbouri while he was on his way home in the center of the city, officer Ali Abdel-Hussein said. The driver was seriously wounded and rushed to al-Sadr Educational Hospital.

* *Disclaimer: Reports contained in this document are selected from publicly available resources and edited by country experts. The information provided here is not, and does not purport to be, either exhaustive with regard to conditions in the country of origin surveyed, or conclusive as to the merits of any particular claim. Further information may be obtained from BO Ankara.*

April 3

Shia militia demolish village near Diwaniya. (UK newspaper *Financial Times*)

A Shia militia group loyal to Shia cleric Muqtada Sadr has wiped out a large village in central Iraq which refused to adhere to its puritanical creed, killing many of its inhabitants and forcing the rest to flee. Hundreds of militiamen from the Mahdi's Army group besieged the town of Kawali, 10km south of the city of Diwaniya, with mortars and smashed walls with sledgehammers three weeks ago, reducing to rubble the entire village famed for its dancers and prostitutes since the 1920s. Sayid Yahya Shubari, the 30-year-old local clerical commander of the Mahdi's Army in Diwaniya, said his militia raided the village after receiving reports that pimps had kidnapped a 12-year-old girl. "It was a well of debauchery, drunkenness and mafia, and they were buying and selling girls," he said. He said Kawali was flattened after the villagers shot an emissary he had sent to negotiate with them. A clerk at Diwaniya general hospital said he saw "many" corpses brought into the hospital after the attack on March 12, but neither residents nor militia sources had exact figures for the dead.

Insurgents shoot dead a town's police chief and his driver in Mahmoudiya. (AP)

Gunmen fired on a vehicle carrying Mahmoudiya's police chief, killing both him and his driver, police said. A separate attack on the police nearby left another two people dead. The shooting occurred as Col. Wisam Hussein, police chief of Mahmoudiya town, 30 kilometers south of Baghdad, was returning home from a trip to the capital. Later, six unidentified assailants attacked a four-member police patrol in the town, killing one officer and wounding three others, one seriously, police officer Khaldoun al-Gurairi said. He said a 60-year-old bystander was also killed in the attack.

April 4

At least 19 dead in Najaf clashes. (Reuters)

At least 19 people were killed and more than 100 wounded in clashes between Spanish-led forces and Iraqi protesters and militiamen near the city of Najaf, hospital officials said. The shooting started after crowds of protesters, including members of the Mehdi Army, a militia that supports Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, marched on a Spanish garrison near Kufa. Witnesses said several protesters threw stones at military vehicles trying to enter the camp. Iraqi police and Spanish-led troops manning the perimeter of the base then opened fire with machine guns, witnesses said. The protesters were demonstrating against the detention of a senior aide to Sadr, Mustapha Yacoubi, who they say was arrested by Spanish troops in Najaf on April 2. The Spanish deny they have detained him. They are also angered by the closure a week ago of the militant *al-Hawza* newspaper.

Security forces open fire on protest in Baghdad. (Reuters)

Security forces opened fire on a Shi'ite protest in central Baghdad. It was not immediately clear who opened fire in Baghdad. U.S. troops and Iraqi security forces were monitoring the demonstration by supporters of Shi'ite cleric Moqtada Sadr.

Car bomb wounds at least 3 in Iraq's Kirkuk-police. (Reuters)

A car bomb exploded in Kirkuk, wounding at least three people, police said. "The car was booby-trapped. The target appears to have been a U.S. convoy," Colonel Burhan

Taher said. U.S. troops had increased their presence in Kirkuk as followers of Moqtada al-Sadr, a Shi'ite cleric, began demonstrating in the city.

Al-Sadr's supporters killed in Amara. (British Broadcasting Corporation / BBC)

Four Shia Iraqis were killed in clashes with UK forces in the south-eastern city of Amara.

April 5

At least twenty-eight Iraqis killed in clashes between US and Iraqi Shiite militia. (Agence France Presse / AFP and AP)

Up to nine coalition soldiers and 24 Iraqis were killed and more than 200 people wounded, after a Shiite leader urged his supporters to "terrorize" the enemy. On April 4 evening, a pitched battle with the militia of young Shiite firebrand Moqtada Sadr claimed the lives of seven US soldiers in the poverty-stricken Baghdad suburb of Sadr City. Sadr had told supporters to "terrorize" the enemy, saying demonstrations were now pointless. "Terrorise your enemy, as we cannot remain silent over its violations," Sadr said in a statement distributed on April 4 by his office in Kufa, south of Baghdad. It was not clear if Sadr was literally calling on his followers to resort to violence. In the fighting in Baghdad, the US soldiers died trying to prevent members of Sadr's several thousand-strong Mehdi Army, militias made up of mainly unemployed, young Shiites, taking control of police and public buildings. "Specifically, the militia attempted to occupy and gain control of police stations and government buildings," the US military said. Shiite spiritual leader Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani appealed for calm and urged Shiite demonstrators to resolve their differences with coalition forces through negotiation.

On April 4, Sadr supporters managed to seize the main police station and other public buildings in the central Iraqi city of Kufa. Four people died in fighting between Sadr militiamen and British soldiers in the southern city of Amara.

One of the main sparks for the fighting was the arrest of Sadr's deputy Mustafa al-Yaaqubi in connection with the murder of the rival cleric al-Khoi in 2003. Yaaqubi is to be handed to police for trial in Iraq's central criminal court. The coalition said 13 people had been detained for involvement in the murder and 12 other warrants still had to be served, but officials refused to say if Sadr was one of those sought.

Al-Sadr official denies supporters started Baghdad fighting. (Qatari Al-Jazeera satellite TV)

Martyr Al-Sadr Central Office member As'ad Turki denied that they started the fighting with US forces. He said they had initiated a sit-in in the morning, according to the instructions of Muqtada al-Sadr at their office in the Al-Shu'lah area in Baghdad. Muqtada al-Sadr took the first step by staging a sit-in the Al-Kufah mosque. He alleged that the US forces besieged the Al-Shu'lah and started fire. Five people were killed and others were wounded in the shouting. He said: "We have instructions from the Al-Sadr office that we must first refer to the religious seminary before we say or do anything. This is why all our people abided by the instructions issued by leader Muqtada al-Sadr. We did not fire a single shot."

Al-Sadr's supporters protest in Basra. (BBC)

In Basra, about 150 Mehdi Army members occupied the governor's office as part of the protests, but said they were staging a peaceful sit-in. Brief exchanges of gunfire have been reported outside the office with soldiers from the city's UK garrison, but there is no indication of casualties.

Several people reportedly killed in US bombardment. (BBC World News)

US troops have launched a big offensive against Iraqi insurgents in the Sunni town of Falluja. US aircraft were reported to have struck a residential area in the city, killing many people according to witnesses.

April 6

Iraqi Shi'ite militia battles Italian troops in Nassiriya. (Reuters)

About 15 Iraqi civilians and Iraqi soldiers were killed in the clashes between Italian troops and Shi'ite militiamen in the southern town of Nassiriya

Clashes with Shi'ite militiamen were also reported in the southern towns of Amara, where British troops are responsible for security, and Kut, patrolled by Ukrainian soldiers. A local government official said two militiamen were wounded by Polish soldiers in battles south of Kerbala.

Clashes restarted in Fallujah. (Reuters)

In Falluja, heavy fighting erupted in some parts of the city as U.S. Marines pressed on with a major mission to root out guerrillas in the city. Marines have sealed off the Sunni Muslim town and imposed a curfew. The mission - "Operation Vigilant Resolve" - follows the killing and mutilation of four U.S. contractors in the town last week.

Wanted Shiite cleric Sadr ends Kufa sit-in, moves to holy city of Najaf. (AFP)

Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr ended his sit-in at a mosque in Kufa and travelled to the holy city of Najaf "to prevent more bloodshed".

UNHCR suspends returns of Iraqi refugees from Iran. (Reuters)

UNHCR said it had temporarily suspended convoys of Iraqi refugees returning from Iran due to insecurity in southern Iraq. The decision came after 25 returnees were stranded in Basra overnight when drivers afraid of illegal checkpoints and hijackings refused to go beyond the southern city to take them to their final destination, UNHCR said. Armed supporters of radical Shi'ite Muslim cleric Moqtada al-Sadr have demonstrated against the United States' postwar plans for Iraq over the past few days and occupied the governor's office in Basra. A convoy carrying more than 200 Iraqis, many exiled for two decades, had been due to return from Shiraz, Iran, but will stay at least temporarily at Shalamchah just inside Iran, he added. The UNHCR says it does not promote the return of Iraqis to their homeland, due to insecurity, but helps facilitate the voluntary repatriation of those who insist on returning. Many of UNHCR's partner agencies working in Iraq are increasingly concerned about the security situation and some of have moved staff to Kuwait, according to Kessler. "Despite the enormous humanitarian needs, agencies are working to keep their profiles as discreet as possible, which is making it very difficult to provide aid to returning refugees," he said.

Two S. Koreans kidnapped by Shia militia in Iraq. (Japanese news agency Kyodo News)

Two South Korean humanitarian workers were kidnapped in southern Iraq by members of a Shia militia group called the al-Mahdi Army, demanding the pullout of Italian forces in exchange for their release.

U.S. troops arresting suspects in Falluja. (Reuters)

U.S. troops armed with photographs have captured a number of people in the restive city of Falluja in Iraq in a search for those responsible for an ambush that killed four American security guards there last week, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said. "The (U.S.) forces have cordoned off the city. They have photographs of a good many people who were involved in the attacks against the individuals and they have been conducting raids in the city against high-value targets," Rumsfeld said. "They have captured a number of people over the last 36 hours. The city is isolated. A number of people have resisted and have been killed. It will be a methodical effort to find the individuals who were involved," he added.

Cleric's Supporters Control Buildings In Najaf. (Dow Jones International News)

Supporters of Muqtada al-Sadr now control several buildings, including the governor's office, police stations and a mosque in Najaf. Sadr's followers reportedly controlled the Imam Ali mosque, one of the holiest shrines of Shiite Muslims. According to the source, al-Sadr was busing followers into Najaf from the Sadr City area of Baghdad. Business people were closing their shops, and either leaving the city or storing their wares in their homes, the network said.

April 7

52 killed in US bombing of Al-Fallujah. (Qatari Al-Jazeera satellite TV)

Medical sources in Al-Fallujah have reported that 52 people have been killed and over 100 others wounded, most of whom are women and children, in the US shelling of the city. The US shelling continued during the night, during which the city suffered a complete power outage. The residents of the city called on the United Nations and international organizations to intervene to lift the siege imposed on them.

BBC Report on the same news: A US air strike has killed up to 40 people inside a mosque compound during heavy fighting in the Sunni town of Falluja, witnesses say. The US military said the strike targeted insurgents who had fired from inside the mosque compound, wounding five Marines.

Al Sadr aide killed by Polish troops in Karbala. (AP)

Fighters from the militia of cleric Muqtada al-Sadr opened fire on a Polish patrol in Karbala, sparking a gunbattle in the streets. During the fighting, an official from al-Sadr's office, Muntadhir al-Mussawi - who is also a cleric - was killed, his office said. Later, mourners carried away his body, chanting, "Today we will free Karbala from the Jews."

April 8

Five Iraqis dead in explosion in Baladrooz. (AFP).

Five Iraqis were killed and 18 wounded by a makeshift bomb on a fruit stand that went off in the town of Baladrooz north of Baghdad, a police official said. The blast killed five passersby and wounded 18 other people.

Iraqi group abducts 3 Japanese, asks Japan to leave. (Chinese Xinhua News Agency)

An Iraqi resistance group has abducted three Japanese nationals and threatened to kill them if Japan does not leave the country within three days.

Ansar al-Din organization claims arresting two Arabs, allegedly "Israeli agents" in Baghdad. (Iranian Arabic Al-Alam TV)

An Iraqi group, calling itself Ansar al-Din organization, announced the arrest of two Israeli agents. The first is an Israeli called George Ya'qub and the second is called Ahmad Yasin Tikati. The group demanded their exchange for the Iraqi prisoners held by the US occupation forces.

Demonstrators in Mosul support al-Sadr and Fallujah people. (Turkish Anatolian News Agency)

Around two thousand people hold a demonstration in front of the Mosul University in support of Moqtada Al-Sadr and the "resistance" in Fallujah.

April 9

Insurgents seize stretch of main highway leading to Fallujah. (AFP)

Armed insurgents seized control of the highway linking the predominantly Sunni Muslim town of Abu Gharib with their besieged bastion of Fallujah. Hundreds of militants armed with rocket-propelled grenades and Kalashnikov assault rifles were running along the highway or hiding in houses nearby. Armed militants were also stationed outside Abu Gharib prison. Insurgents said that they attacked the prison at the night of April 8. US forces retreated from their positions and 55 prisoners escaped. The claims could not be immediately confirmed from coalition sources.

Iraqi "Al-Jihad al-Muhammadi" group claims kidnap of foreigners. (Lebanese LBC Sat TV)

Iraqi armed men have taken four Italians and two American hostages in the western suburbs of Baghdad. A group calling itself Al-Jihad al-Muhammadi Brigades had announced in a statement its responsibility for kidnapping a number of foreigners. The group called for negotiations to end the Al-Fallujah siege in return for releasing the detainees.

US forces regain control of Al-Kut. (UK newspaper *The Guardian*)

US troops regained control of Kut, driving out members of Mr Sadr's al-Mahdi Army militia who seized the city earlier this week. The militia still controls the city of Kufa and the central part of Najaf, and US commanders announced a major operation to crush them. US forces moved into Kut two days after Ukrainian forces abandoned the city in the face of heavy fighting with al-Sadr followers. Police in several cities have also abandoned their stations or stood aside as the gunmen roam the streets. US forces

that swept into Kut before dawn seized police stations, forcing out both Iraqi police and militiamen and confiscating all police weapons stores throughout the city, witnesses said. There was little resistance. A US helicopter struck Mr Sadr's main office in Kut, killing two people, witnesses said. During the day, Americans were out in force, patrolling Kut's streets.

April 10

Red Crescent director, wife found dead in Mosul. (AFP)

The director of the Iraqi Red Crescent in the city of Arbil and his wife have been murdered, a Red Crescent official said. The bodies of Barzan Omar Ahmad and his wife Sazane Ismail Abdullah, who also works at the Red Crescent, were discovered on a street in the Hay al-Intisar district of the city of Mosul, said Hawar Fares.

Iraqi council member reportedly escapes assassination attempt. (Lebanese LBC Sat TV)

A member of the Iraqi Governing Council was exposed to an assassination attempt near the city of Al-Hillah. Ahmad al-Barrak escaped an attack by gunmen on his car during which three of his guards were wounded.

Iraqi police also said that unidentified men killed an Iraqi translator working for the US Army in the centre of Al-Hillah. Police said that three masked gunmen driving a car opened fire on the translator, killing him.

Five policemen, two attackers, civilian killed in Mosul attacks. (AFP)

Five policemen, two assailants and a civilian were killed in two separate attacks in the city of Mosul, police said. Armed men reportedly opened fire on a patrol in the Wihda neighborhood in the eastern sector of the city, killing two policemen and a taxi driver who was passing by. Three other policemen and two assailants were killed when gunmen clashed with US troops and Iraqi policemen in a separate incident, the police said. Seven armed men reportedly attacked the police station in the city center. Policemen and US soldiers retaliated and pursued the assailants, some of whom sought refuge in a mosque and others in a house.

April 11

7 Chinese kidnapped in Iraq. (Xinhua News Agency)

Seven Chinese were kidnapped by armed men in central Iraq, a Chinese diplomat in Baghdad said. The seven Chinese citizens entered Iraq via Jordan in the morning of April 9, and were most probably abducted in Fallujah, the diplomat said. Unidentified foreigners released in Fallujah told the press that they met seven Asian persons with Chinese passports detained in a room in a secret location. Insurgents in Iraq have claimed that they held a number of foreigners as hostages in an effort to negotiate a ceasefire or a full withdrawal of occupying troops.

April 12

Two policemen killed, two wounded in bomb in Baquba. (AFP)

Two policemen were killed and two others wounded by a roadside bomb in Baquba, police said. The explosion reportedly occurred at 10:30 a.m. in the Mafrak

headquarters as the policemen were heading toward the general hospital to donate blood to the besieged residents of Fallujah.

Iraqi council member says 12 hostages freed. (Kyodo News)

A member of Iraq's Governing Council said that 12 hostages have been released.

Germans evacuated from Iraq. (Reuters)

German aid organisations evacuated their last four workers from Iraq due to the deteriorating security situation, a spokesman for one of the groups said. The government said two embassy guards feared killed in an ambush last week remained missing. A spokesman for the "Aktion Deutschland Hilft" said the last four members of a 10-person team removing munitions from residential areas left Baghdad on a U.N. aircraft for Amman.

NGO suspends work following kidnappings. (UN OCHA Integrated Regional Information Network / IRIN)

Following a series of recent kidnappings of foreigners in Iraq, including a Japanese aid worker, an international NGO, one of a handful remaining in the country, has decided to pull out temporarily. The Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) announced that it was suspending mine clearing activity in Baghdad and withdrawing international staff to Amman in Jordan.

Al-Sadr posters threaten to shed blood of Iraqis helping US. (London-based newspaper *Al-Hayat*)

Stores selling computer disks in some Baghdad neighbourhoods and in some other Iraqi provinces are offering CDs for sale on which are recorded the speeches of the Shi'i leader Muqtada al-Sadr and other Shi'i and Sunnis clerics calling for resistance and revolution against the Americans. Citizens have recounted that posters carrying appeals and statements were plastered on the walls of buildings in many parts of the Iraqi capital in the past few days, especially crowded neighbourhoods and some leaflets have been distributed to the citizens. They include a warning to the members of the Iraqi Army, the Civil Defence and the police not to cooperate or collaborate with the occupier and threatening to shed the blood of anyone who disregards this warning. It has been noticed that these posters and statements that carry the signature of Al-Mahdi's Army, which belongs to Al-Sadr's followers, are directed to Muslim imams and religious authorities at the Iraqi institute of Shi'i religious learning [Al-Hawzah] and the members of the Iraqi population. The posters call for escalating the "intifadah" against the US occupier.

Eleven Russians kidnapped in Iraq. (Qatari Al-Jazeera satellite TV)

Russian International Company for Energy Services said that 11 Russians of the workers in the company's branch in Baghdad have been kidnapped. There are unconfirmed reports that two Iraqi guards in the building of the company might have been killed in armed confrontations with the kidnappers.

Al-Sadr militia pulls out of police stations in Najaf, Kufa, Karbala. (AP)

A Shiite cleric has pulled his militiamen out of police stations and government facilities in three cities they took control of this week, partially meeting a U.S. demand for ending the standoff in southern Iraq, the cleric's representative said. Police were back on the streets and in their stations in Najaf, Kufa and Karbala for the first

time in days since the al-Mahdi Army militia of cleric Muqtada al-Sadr rose up last week in bloody fighting against U.S.-led forces in much of the south, witnesses said. Few of the black-garbed gunmen of al-Mahdi Army were seen in Najaf's streets, except around its holy shrines in the center of the city. Militiamen also stayed out of sight in nearby Kufa, and their numbers were lower around their main stronghold in the city, its main mosque. A police officer in Karbala said police forces have taken control of all stations in the city.

The son of Iraq's most powerful Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Husseini al-Sistani -- a moderate who has shunned anti-U.S. violence -- met with al-Sadr in his office, telling him al-Sistani rejects any military move against al-Sadr and the holy city. Along with al-Sistani's son, the sons of Iraq's two other grand ayatollahs were at the meeting. Shiite Governing Council member Abdul-Karim Mahoud al-Mohammedawi was mediating with al-Sadr on how to resolve the crisis and avert a U.S. assault.

Iraqi clerics secure release of seven Chinese hostages. (Qatari Al-Jazeera satellite TV)

The Muslim Ulema Commission in Iraq has announced that the seven Chinese people arrested earlier were handed over by masked men to the council. The masked men released the seven hostages this evening in front of Um al-Qura mosque in Baghdad. The hostages were carrying a letter confirming that this step comes in response to an appeal by the Muslim Ulema Commission to release the hostages. Representatives from the council handed the hostages over to the first secretary in the Chinese Embassy in Baghdad.

Iraqi troops reject Falluja duty. (BBC)

A senior US military officer in Iraq has said that a battalion of the new Iraqi army refused to support US forces in the town of Falluja. The 620-man battalion, which graduated from training camp on 6 January, refused to go to Falluja after being shot at in a Shia area of Baghdad. It was the first time US commanders had sought to involve post-war Iraqi forces in major combat operations. The troops were quoted as saying they had not signed up to fight Iraqis.

April 13

Shiite radicals' Baghdad chief detained by US-led coalition. (AFP)

Shiite Muslim leader Moqtada Sadr's top aide Sheikh Hazem al-Araji said he had been arrested by troops of the US-led coalition at a Baghdad hotel. Araji was reached on his mobile telephone before hanging up abruptly. A Sheraton security guard said he saw Araji arrive at the hotel with two bodyguards and said the sheikh was arrested inside the hotel.

Two police killed in Mahawail. (AFP)

Two Iraqi police were killed when an armed group attacked the police headquarters in Mahawail, 80 kilometres south of Baghdad, a local police officer said. It was reported that an armed group attacked the building of the Mahawil police directorate in Mahawil, killing two police and injuring three others in an exchange of fire which lasted two hours.

France advises its citizens to leave Iraq (AFP)

The French government advised its citizens in Iraq to leave the country, the Foreign Ministry said.

French journalist abducted in Iraq. (AP)

A French journalist has been taken hostage in Iraq, the French Foreign Ministry said. Foreign Ministry spokesman Herve Ladsous didn't release the name of the hostage.

City force caught between Coalition and followers of Muqtada al-Sadr. (Institute for War and Peace Reporting / IWPR)

The holy city of Karbala is beset by opposing armed forces, and the city's police are caught in the middle. US and Polish troops and soldiers of the New Iraqi Army have cut the roads outside the city, while inside militias loyal to a variety of Shia religious factions hold sway. People loyal to Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali al-Husseini al-Sistani and the Badr Brigades of the Supreme Council cluster at intersections alongside fighters from Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army, whose clash with the Coalition precipitated this crisis. Earlier, the forces of the Mahdi Army stormed the governorate building and police stations. In the governorate building, the police fled, although Polish forces repulsed the Sadrists.

April 14

French Red Cross suspends operations in Iraq (AFP)

The French branch of the Red Cross said it has suspended its operations in Iraq because of the growing risks created by the spate of hostage-takings there. As a result, programmes to reestablish some networks for distributing drinking water in Iraq would be suspended.

Iraqi beaten to death by US troops in Kut. (AFP)

An Iraqi has died of his wounds after US troops beat him with truncheons because he refused to remove a picture of wanted Shiite Muslim leader Moqtada Sadr from his car on April 14, police said. The motorist was stopped by US troops conducting search operations on a street in the center of the central city of Kut.

French hostage released in Iraq, dozens of others remain in captivity. (AFP)

A kidnapped French journalist was freed in Iraq but around 40 foreigners are still being held hostage amid a wave of kidnappings designed to shake the US coalition. Television reporter Alexandre Jordanov, who was taken hostage south of Baghdad three days ago, was in good health despite his ordeal, diplomats said. A coalition official said Tuesday about 40 hostages from at least 12 countries were being held hostage in Iraq. The known abductees include three Japanese, four Italians, three Czechs, an American, a Canadian and an Israeli.

Iraqi Kurdistan Communist Party elects new leader. (Iraqi Kurdish newspaper *Hawlati*)

At the third congress of the Kurdistan Communist Party, held in Suleimaniya on 8-10 April, Kamal Shakir was elected as the new secretary of the party to succeed Karim Ahmad. The congress, held under the banner "All Capabilities for Democracy, Federalism, Unity and Social Justice" was held at the Kurdistan Communist Party Hall in the Rizgari District of Suleimaniya. In addition to the reading of and debate on

the political, organizational and economic report, the participants elected a 27-member new central committee, two of the members are women - a Chaldo-Assyrian and an Ezidi [also referred to as Yezidi].

Iraq kidnappers kill Italian hostage. (Reuters)

It was reported that the kidnappers of four Italians in Iraq had killed one hostage and were threatening to kill the rest.

April 15

Rocket attack kills mother and two sons in Baqubah. (Reuters)

A rocket attack killed a mother and her two teenage sons north of Baghdad and badly wounded her two daughters. Two rockets slammed into houses in a residential neighbourhood of Baquba. Walls crumbled, debris was strewn through the homes and a car was destroyed.

Four killed in missile attack in Mosul. (Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party Kurdistan Satellite TV)

It was reported that a Katyusha missile struck Al-Bab al-Jadid District in Mosul, which killed four citizens, injured seven and damaged buildings and vehicles in the area.

April 16

At least five killed in Iraq Kufa clashes. (Reuters)

At least five people were killed and 20 injured in clashes between a Shi'ite militia and U.S. forces near the Iraqi town of Kufa, a hospital doctor said.

U.S. citizen kidnapped from his hotel in Basra. (AP)

An U.S. businessman was abducted from his hotel in Basra by kidnappers disguised as policemen, Basra police chief said.

Three freed in Iraq kidnapped near Fallujah. (Kyodo News)

The three Japanese released by their captors in Iraq have said they were kidnapped by an armed group around noon local time on April 7 at a gas station near the restive city of Fallujah, government sources said.

April 17

Five hostages freed. (UK newspaper The Guardian)

Five foreign hostages were freed in Iraq, but two more were seized. Three Czech journalists seized six days ago were handed over to the Czech embassy in Baghdad, and a Canadian aid worker was delivered to the office in Najaf of the Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr. A Chinese citizen was also reported freed, as Mr Sadr called for the release of all hostages from countries not connected to the coalition in Iraq. But two businessmen, a Dane and an Emirati, were believed to have been kidnapped, joining about 30 foreigners from various countries being held, most of them in the besieged city of Falluja.

April 18

Coalition forces arrest Al-Mahdi Army, Turkoman Front officials. (Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party newspaper *Khabat*)

Coalition forces reportedly arrested the battalion commander of Al-Mahdi Army in the Daquq Administrative District, Raf'at Jalal, and the Turkoman Front official in Daquq, named Yasar as well as a and a military official in Al-Mahdi Army, Ahmad Hasawi.

April 19

Ansar-al-Islam members arrested in Suleimaniya. (Iraqi Patriotic Union of Kurdistan's KurdSat TV)

Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, PUK-led regional government's security forces reportedly arrested 17 people between 14 and 19 April, all of whom allegedly "confessed" to be working for Ansar-al-Islam group and being connected to its leadership.

Coalition official confirms that U.S. troops killed journalist. (Committee to Protect Journalists)

Coalition forces in Iraq, confirmed that U.S. troops killed an Iraqi journalist and his driver near the Iraqi city of Samara. Asaad Kadhim, a correspondent for the U.S. government-funded *Al-Iraqiya TV*, and his driver, Hussein Saleh, died after being struck by gunfire from U.S. forces near a checkpoint. Cameraman Jassem Kamel was injured in the shooting.

April 20

At least twenty-two dead, nearly 100 hurt as mortar rounds hit Baghdad-area jail. (AFP)

Twenty-two prisoners were killed and nearly 100 were injured when 12 mortar rounds slammed into a detention facility, the Baghdad Confinement Facility, administered by the coalition at Abu Gharib. Ninety-two people were injured and 25 of the most badly hurt were taken away by helicopter, some to the fortified green zone in the centre of Baghdad for treatment. A military spokesman said later that 4,400 "security detainees" were held at the jail, one of the largest US-run prison facilities in Iraq, that has been regularly attacked by insurgents. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said according to figures it has been given by the coalition, the facility holds some 6,500 inmates, of which about 2,000 are inside for criminal offences.

April 21

Guerrillas attack police stations in Basra, at least 40 killed. (Reuters)

Explosions ripped through three police stations in Basra, causing many casualties, police and witnesses said. At least 40 people were killed and scores wounded in car bombings. Witnesses counted 40 bodies at one Basra hospital. Among the dead were many children who had been traveling to kindergarten in a minibus that was caught in one blast. Many other civilians and police were killed or wounded.

AP report on the same new on April 23: The death toll in a series of suicide bombings that targeted police stations and the police academy in the southern city of Basra rose to 74, with more than 160 people wounded, a coalition spokesman said.

April 22

South African security guard killed in Baghdad market. (Qatari Al-Jazeera satellite TV)

Iraqi Health Minister Khudayr Abbas has said that a security man from South Africa working for the occupation troops was killed and an Iraqi translator who was accompanying him was wounded after they were shot in a market in the Al-A'zamiyah neighbourhood of Baghdad.

Kidnapped Palestinian aid worker freed in Iraq. (AP)

A Palestinian kidnapped while working for a non-profit U.S. company in Iraq was released and appeared to be in good condition. There were no details on how Nabil George Yaqub Razzouk, 30, had been treated since his capture April 8. Razzouk was working with a local government project, when he was kidnapped in the area of Najaf. Fadi Fadel, a Canadian aid worker who was abducted a day earlier, was released in good condition last week and is now home with his family in Quebec.

April 23

Iraqi Red Crescent opens a camp for Al-Fallujah refugees. (KurdSat TV)

The Iraqi Red Crescent has said that a camp had been set up in one of the areas in Baghdad for the Al-Fallujah homeless people who had not returned to their town yet. According to an interview with an Iraqi Red Crescent official, currently 35 families have been accommodated in the camp and provided with tents and essential equipment.

Truce brings reduction of violence in Falluja; humanitarian workers speak of US soldiers firing at ambulances and civilians. (BBC)

A truce has brought a reduction in violence in the Iraqi city of Falluja after US troops fought insurgents there during a two-week siege. There was little media access during the fighting, but eyewitness reports are now emerging. Humanitarian workers speak of US soldiers firing at ambulances and civilians. Coalition forces began the operation to "pacify" insurgent fighters in the city on 5 April. It followed the murder and mutilation in late March of four security contractors working for the coalition in the city. In one of the incidents, a driver and paramedic in an ambulance were shot in a US-controlled area - one in the chest, the other in the eyes. The injured civilians inside the ambulance bled to death during the next two days as warning shots were fired when the team tried - four times - to return to collect the ambulance.

April 24

Roadside bomb kills 13 Iraqis in Haswa. (AP)

A roadside bomb exploded near a bus south of Baghdad, killing 13 Iraqis, including at least one child, and wounding 17 people, a hospital official said. The blast occurred on a main road in the town of Haswa. The bomb was planted in the ground and went

off as a bus carrying 21 people was passing. The dead included passengers and bystanders, among them a 4-year-old boy, said Wasan Nasser, a doctor at Iskan Hospital in neighboring Iskandariyah. Several critically wounded people were sent to a hospital in nearby Hilla.

Four policemen killed, 12 wounded in attack in Tikrit. (Xinhua News Agency)

Four Iraqi policemen were killed and 12 people were wounded in a car bomb attack near a US military base in Tikrit, police said.

At least 9 Iraqis killed in Baghdad market explosions. (Kyodo News)

At least nine Iraqis were killed in several explosions in Baghdad's Sadr City.

April 25

Four Iraqis killed, 12 injured in Mosul rocket attacks. (AFP)

At least four Iraqis were killed and 12 injured in a series of rocket attacks on a hotel, a police building, a local television station and hospital in Mosul. A rocket hit the parking lot of the Ashoor hotel in the centre of the city at about 10:10 am. The parking lot attendant was killed as well as an operator of the generator supplying power to the hotel, which suffered external damage. Separately, two police officers were wounded when a Russian-made Katyusha rocket hit a police building housing a vehicle repair unit north of the city at about 9:45 am. One of the policemen lost a leg and an arm in the attack. Another rocket targeted a local television and radio station. It was not immediately clear if there were any casualties from this attack. Loud explosions were also heard throughout the city. The first rocket hit Al-Salam hospital, in the eastern part of the city, at about 9:30 am, killing two medics who worked in the laboratory and injuring ten other employees.

April 27

US forces reportedly killed 64 Shia militiamen in fighting near Najaf. (BBC World News)

US forces in Iraq say they have killed 64 Shia Muslim militiamen and destroyed an anti-aircraft weapon in fighting near the holy city of Najaf. The clashes took place hours after US troops had moved into a base in Najaf being vacated by Spanish troops withdrawing from Iraq.

April 28

Five Iraqi policemen killed, two injured in Mosul attack (AFP)

Five Iraqi policemen were killed and two wounded when armed gunmen opened fire at a patrol in the center of Mosul. The attack reportedly occurred at about 4:30 pm in the Palestine neighbourhood when three armed men in a vehicle opened fire with machine guns. He said the attackers fled the scene leaving their car in which machine guns and rocket propelled grenade launchers were found.

April 30

US forces begin Falluja pullout. (BBC)

American marines have been withdrawing from the Iraqi city of Falluja after weeks of bloody clashes with rebels. A new Iraqi force, led by one of Saddam Hussein's former generals, will move into the city while US troops maintain a presence in and around Falluja. Coalition military chiefs hope the Iraqi force will be more able to gain the trust of the city's residents. General Jasim Mohamed Saleh, who used to command a brigade of the Republican Guard, said he was forming "a new emergency military force" that would help bring order to the town. US military spokesman Brig Gen Mark Kimmitt says marines have vetted General Saleh and have confidence in him. Doctors there say 600 people have been killed and thousands have fled the city since the siege began on 5 April.

Council head reportedly killed in Baghdad's Al-Sadr City. (Kuwaiti news agency Kuna)

The chairman of advisory municipal council in the city of Al-Sadr, Suwadi al-Shatti, was killed in mysterious circumstances after being reported missing for 48 hours, said residents of Al-Sadr. Al-Shatti was reportedly killed the day before and was suspended from an electricity pole at dawn. The municipal council has not blamed anyone for the killing. Sources wishing to remain anonymous alleged that members of Al-Madhi Army were responsible. Al-Shatti had been appointed by the Coalition Provisional Authority as chairman for the advisory municipal council in 2003 after his predecessor, Al-Baythani, was killed by US forces in an accident that took place when the US army removed a black Shi'i banner from atop a communication pole in Al-Sadr and caused hostility on the part of the residents. Meanwhile, the Baghdad Council has approved the appointing of Lu'ayy al-Urs and is awaiting the approval of Civil Administrator Paul Bremer. The Baghdad Council groups 46 members, Al-Urs having been one of six others who nominated themselves for the position.

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