

Story: U.S. Soldiers Held as Prisoners of War, 3/23/03

Iraqi troops captured at least five U.S. soldiers in an ambush in southern Iraq.

Iraqi forces captured a group of U.S. soldiers attached to a **maintenance unit** and may have killed some of them before televising interrogations of the others on Sunday.

At least five captured U.S. soldiers were shown on Iraqi television and the Arab television network **Al Jazeera**, answering questions from their captors. Two of the prisoners being interviewed reportedly had bandaged wounds. What appeared to be at least four dead bodies in U.S. uniforms were also visible in the broadcasts, some with apparent gunshot wounds to the head.

Iraqi ambush

Several of those interviewed said they were members of the 507th maintenance group.

Coalition forces told reporters that 12 soldiers were missing after a supply and maintenance convoy came under attack near the southern city of Nasiriya. According to Brig. Gen. Vincent Brooks, **Iraqi Republican Guard** or **guerillas** attacked the column.

Brooks said the military believed the 12 missing soldiers were "in the custody of the irregular forces that conducted the ambush, and their status is not known."

U.S. criticizes Arab broadcasts

Army Lt. Gen. John Abizaid added that some of the 12 missing soldiers "ended up on Baghdad TV." He also criticized the Al Jazeera satellite channel for broadcasting the images to much of the Arab world.

The officials said the U.S. military is using information from the broadcasts to try to identify the soldiers in order to notify their families. American and humanitarian authorities roundly criticized the interviews

and the treatment of the first American **Prisoners of War** (POWs).

The Geneva Convention

"We don't know all the details yet. We do know that we expect them to be treated humanely just like we are treating the prisoners of theirs that we capture humanely," President Bush told reporters after returning to the White House from the Camp David presidential retreat.

U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said that parading prisoners of war before television cameras is a violation of the **Geneva Convention**, a set of rules that supposedly govern nations' conduct in the event of war. The International Red Cross has also said the broadcasts violated Convention rules.

"Article 13 of the Third Geneva Convention says clearly that prisoners of war must at all times be protected... against insult and public curiosity," said Red Cross spokeswoman Nada Doumani.

Iraqi Defense Minister Sultan Hashim Ahmad told a Baghdad news conference Iraq would treat prisoners of war in accordance with the Geneva Convention.

Article 13

The convention section that directly deals with the treatment of prisoners is Article 13 and reads as follows:

"Prisoners of war must at all times be humanely treated. Any unlawful act or omission by the Detaining Power causing death or seriously endangering the health of a prisoner of war in its custody is prohibited, and will be regarded as a serious breach of the present Convention. In particular, no prisoner of war may be subjected to physical mutilation or to medical or scientific experiments of any kind which are not justified by the medical, dental or hospital treatment of the prisoners concerned and carried out in his interest.

"Likewise, prisoners of war must at all times be protected, particularly against acts of violence or intimidation and against insults and public curiosity.

"Measures of reprisal against prisoners of war are prohibited."

Vocabulary

maintenance unit - (n.) A unit made up of mechanics and other technical support who keep military equipment working.

Al-Jazeera television network - (n.) ("The Island" in Arabic) pan-Arab satellite television news station based in Qatar (The Christian Science Monitor)

Iraqi Republican Guard - (n.) elite 25,000-man special forces of Iraq
guerilla - (n.) member of an irregular military force fighting small-scale, limited actions against conventional military forces. Guerrilla tactics involve constantly shifting attack operations and include the use of sabotage and terrorism. (Encyclopedia Britannica)

Prisoners of War - - (n.) any person captured or interned by a troops on the other side during war. In the strictest sense it is applied only to members of regularly organized armed forces, but by broader definition it has also included guerrillas, civilians who take up arms against an enemy openly. (Encyclopedia Britannica)

Geneva Convention - any of a series of international treaties concluded in Geneva, Switz., between 1864 and 1949, for the purpose of improving the effects of war on soldiers and civilians.(Encyclopedia Britannica)