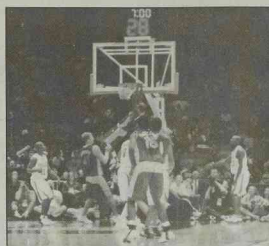


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Ground troops continue push towards Baghdad

Beth Wyche

News Reporter

With a week's worth of war underway and the coalition death toll at 45, U.S. troops continue to press towards Baghdad.

"I've found that (resistance) really surprising," said Somanna Muthanna, a senior industrial engineering management major.

"I think a lot of people expected it to be really quick, with all of our military might and technology. It has been surprising knowing how many people are dying and that are being held prisoner."

Despite hopes of a quick victory, the events early in the week have shown that "Operation Iraqi Freedom" will not end without encountering serious resistance.

"The military is making good progress in Iraq, yet this war is far from over," said President Bush to troops and families at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida early Wednesday morning, according to *The Associated Press*.

"As they approach Baghdad, our fighting units are facing the most desperate elements of a doomed regime," said Bush. "We cannot know the duration of this war, but we are prepared for the battle ahead."

Some UNCA students express concern about those experiencing the war firsthand.

"I hurt for the people that we're losing; that they're (Iraqis) losing and I just wish something would shift," said Cynthia Baldwin, a junior psychology major.

"You can't expect to interact with someone who has behaviors like Saddam Hussein, or his regime's



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U.S. and coalition troops have faced blinding sandstorms in Iraq, slowing down the progression of ground forces towards Baghdad (above left). American marines from the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit give a detained Iraqi soldier water after approximately 200 Iraqi troops surrendered in Southern Iraq (above right).

behaviors, and expect to come out OK. Now that the killing has begun, I am deeply disappointed that it's come to that."

U.S. and coalition forces have faced the strongest resistance in and around the cities of An Najaf, Basra, and Nasiriyah from Iraq's Republican Guard, as well as the paramilitary groups Saddam Fedayeen.

Fierce fighting continues in Najaf, located in central Iraq about 90 miles southwest of Baghdad, according to *The New York Times*.

After the U.S. encirclement of Najaf, reports of around 1,000 Iraqi mili-

tary vehicles traveling towards Najaf emerged. Iraqi forces hope to seize control of a key Euphrates River bridge, according to CNN's Web site.

The New York Times reported that the U.S. Army's Third Infantry troops secured three bridges and encircled Najaf after an intense 36 hours of battle.

"What I've done is to surround the city and cut it off," said the division's commander, Maj. Gen. Buford C. Blount 3rd.

Najaf was not an original target for military officials; rather Iraqis

launched an offensive attack on troops headed for Baghdad, according to *The New York Times*.

U.S. forces killed between an estimated 150 to 500 Iraqi troops, a senior defense official told *The Associated Press*.

However, within the city of Najaf, clashes continue between U.S. troops and the remaining estimated 1,000 Iraqi troops.

An intensive sandstorm on Tuesday impeded the Air Force's ability to protect ground troops during the fighting resulting in some American losses, according to the

CNN Web site.

Meanwhile in the southern port city of Basra, British forces continue to fight more than 1,000 Iraqi militia, according to *The New York Times*.

Coalition forces have struggled in securing this city in an effort to bring in humanitarian aid.

With a population of 1.3 million residents and no electricity since air strikes began, food and water continue to run low, according to *The New York Times*.

U.S. warplanes dropped satellite guided bombs on Basra to assist the

British. Also, conflicting reports have emerged claiming that Iraqi uprisings against Saddam Hussein have occurred in Basra.

British sources say that Basra Shiite Muslim residents are attacking largely Sunni Muslim Baath and Iraqi fighters, according to *The New York Times*.

However, Iraqi Information Minister Mohammed al-Sahhaf denied such an uprising on the Iraqi television media, Al-Jazeera.

Al-Jazeera also claimed as many as

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Red Cross faces nation-wide blood shortages

Becky Reese

News Reporter

The American Red Cross has suffered from a regional and nationwide blood shortage this winter.

"We collect and supply blood for around 100 hospitals in the area, with the majority of the people living in the piedmont and central part of the state," said Joyce Brooks, American Red Cross public relations representative. "When those ice storms started hitting early on in December, we lost thousands of units of blood, and then the Western part of the state would be hit and the next week we would have another snowstorm."

"This time of year also proves difficult for the Red Cross due to schools being out for breaks and snow."

"We're getting about 20 percent of our blood collections from schools, either high schools or colleges and universities," said Brooks. "So when those aren't in regular session around holiday time, we

don't get that particular population of donations."

The Red Cross typically experiences a blood shortage at this time of the year. The shortage also extends outside of the local area, the Carolina blood services region, to the entire nation. As snow repeatedly accumulates in the northeast, as well as the eastern seaboard, blood donations go down everywhere, according to Brooks.

"I think that it's been more challenging this year simply because of the weather, and we gauge and know that people are going to be sick and things like that during this time, so that's also a concern," said Brooks. "People aren't going to get out when it's bad weather to give blood. I mean, they barely get out to get milk and bread."

The Carolina blood service region consists of almost all of North Carolina, a small part of northern Georgia and part of Eastern Tennessee.

The Carolina blood service region currently has only a two-day supply of the five blood types, and any traumatic event, such as a car wreck or fire, can drain the blood



MAX TAINTOR/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Local residents Bob Walther and Dorothy Rosenberg give blood at the Red Cross on Edgewood Road.

supply dramatically, according to Brooks.

"Theoretically, nationally, we would like to have a seven day supply of every blood type," said Brooks. "We are one of the top regions in the nation with blood

collections, (but) about three days is as much as we can get at any given time."

In a time when war hovers over the head of America, the blood supply, or lack thereof, can become a big issue very quickly. If the mili-

tary needs blood from the civilian population, the Red Cross supplies it, according to Brooks.

"We work very closely with the military, and should there be a need for blood from the civilian population we would work with the military to

supply that blood," said Brooks. "We always have, and we always will have that connection with the military. That (connection) goes back a long way in our history."

However, even the military has problems with getting blood. With restrictions on who can donate blood safely, military travel has eliminated many servicemen from the potential pool of donors, according to Brooks.

"Even the military has found that they're running into some challenges with collecting blood among themselves, because there are so many restrictions now for travel outside the United States, particularly European countries because of mad cow disease," said Brooks. "As a result of that, a lot of servicemen have served in Europe and other overseas countries, and that makes them ineligible to give blood, so they're particularly challenged about meeting their own needs during this time period."

As March begins Red Cross Month, the Red Cross has a new

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