

Iraq attacks leave 20 dead Concerns over security trip up tsunami relief

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Insurgents kidnapped a Catholic archbishop and targeted security forces in a series of brazen assaults Monday that killed more than 20 people. A suicide bomber attacked U.S. Marines in Ramadi, where insurgents also beheaded two Shiite Muslims and left their bodies on a sidewalk.

The top U.S. general in Iraq predicted violence during the Jan. 30 national election but pledged to do "everything in our power" to ensure safety of voters. As part of a crackdown on insurgents, U.S. troops arrested more than 100 suspects over the past three days, U.S. officials said.

In Mosul, Archbishop Basile Georges Casmooussa of the Syrian Catholic Church, was seized by gunmen and the Vatican condemned

the abduction as a "terrorist act." The 66-year-old churchman was grabbed while walking in front of his church, a priest said on condition of anonymity.

Christians make up just 3 percent of Iraq's 26 million people. The major Christian groups include Chaldean-Assyrians and Armenians with small numbers of Roman Catholics.

The deadliest attacks occurred in three cities in the flashpoint region north and west of Baghdad where Sunni Muslim insurgents are seeking to derail the election.

In Buhriz, 35 miles north of Baghdad, gunmen attacked an Iraqi National Guard checkpoint at the provincial broadcasting center, killing eight soldiers and wounding four.

A suicide driver set off a car bomb at a police station in Beiji,

155 miles north of the capital, killing seven policemen and wounding 25 people. A U.S. spokesman said Marines suffered an undisclosed number of casualties in a suicide car bombing in Ramadi, 70 miles west of Baghdad.

Marines sent to check a suspicious vehicle came under small arms and rocket-propelled grenade fire and the vehicle exploded. "There were U.S. casualties," 1st Lt. Lyle Gilbert said, but declined to give further details, citing security.

Later, the U.S. command reported two Marines were killed in action in the province that includes Ramadi but would not say whether they died in the car bombing.

Elsewhere in Ramadi, a predominantly Sunni Muslim city, officials found the bodies of five civilians and one Iraqi soldier.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia — Security fears again threatened to hamper tsunami relief efforts Monday, with U.N. officials banning aid workers from traveling in parts of devastated Aceh province following reports that fighting had broken out between Indonesian government forces and insurgents.

The travel ban also came after Denmark warned its aid workers to beware of an imminent terror attack — a caution that prompted U.N. officials to launch an investigation and declare a state of "heightened awareness" in Aceh, where separatists have been fighting for an independent state for decades.

Insisting that aid workers had nothing to fear, rebel leader Tengku Mucksalmina dismissed Indonesian government claims that insurgents might attack relief convoys in hopes of stealing food for their fighters.

"Our mothers, our wives, our children are victims from this tragedy. We would never ambush any convoy with aid for them," Mucksalmina told The Associated Press from his jungle hideout outside Banda Aceh. "We want them (aid groups) to stay. We ask them not to leave the Acehnese people who are suffering."

The travel ban between the provincial capital of Banda Aceh and the east Sumatran city of Medan came "strictly because of the fighting going on down there," said Mans Nyberg, a spokesman for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

The ban is to be in effect from Monday night until Tuesday morning between the two cities, a 280-mile stretch of road.

"There was reportedly a small battle between the army" and the rebels, Nyberg said. He didn't know when the battle occurred.

Joel Boutroue, the head of the U.N. relief effort in Aceh, said

the ban "was not due to any specific threat" and that it would be reviewed Tuesday.

A rebel spokesman in Sweden, Bahktiar Abdullah, was not able to confirm the reports of fighting. Col. Nachrowi Dzajairi, a spokesman for the Indonesian military in Banda Aceh, said he had received no reports of fighting along the road.

"Obviously, given the fact that there had been conflict in the region, the staff who are there have to be careful, they have to watch what they do," U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan told reporters at the United Nations. He said U.N. workers have not had any major problems with the rebels or any other group.

Relief efforts are being led by nearly 15,000 U.S. troops — most of whom are docked off the coast of western Sumatra island. Australia, Singapore, Germany and other nations also have contributed troops.

Judge indicts 8 on terror charges

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MADRID — A Spanish judge indicted eight people on terrorism charges Monday, saying they provided logistical help and false documents for suspects in the Sept. 11 attacks.

The indictment was released by Spain's leading terror investigator, Judge Baltasar Garzon.

It said the eight had provided logistics and counterfeit documents for suspects including Ramzi Binalshibh, an alleged would-be Sept. 11 hijacker who has been in U.S. custody since his 2002 capture in Pakistan. He is believed to have been the main contact between a group of Sept. 11 attackers in Hamburg, Germany, and Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network.

Binalshibh, who could not get into the United States to participate in the attacks but served as a key money man, reportedly is in U.S. custody at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

The eight indicted suspects were identified as Reda Zerroug,

Redouane Zenimi, Samir Mahdjoub, Mohamed Ayat, Hedi Ben Youssef Boudhiba, Khaled Madani, Tahar Ezirouali and Spaniard Francisco Garcia Gomez.

Garzon said they developed "a network of forged documents to provide false identities or fake documents to other members of the network to help them move about, flee or hide or (to help) with their terrorist activities or links with organizations such as Ansar al-Islam, under the orders of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi." The latter is a Jordanian-born militant blamed for spearheading terrorist actions in Iraq.

Garzon issued an international arrest order for Boudhiba and Ezirouali and ordered the Spaniard's release on \$26,000 bail. The others are jailed in Spain after their arrests between February and June.

Garzon said Boudhiba is in jail in Britain. He said Boudhiba traveled from Hamburg to Istanbul, Turkey, on Sept. 3, 2001, along

with a man named Ahmed Taleb, a member of the Hamburg cell blamed for carrying out the Sept. 11 attacks. The alleged leader of the cell was suspected suicide pilot Mohamed Atta.

Investigators said Spain, along with Germany, was a major staging ground for the Sept. 11 attacks.

Binalshibh and Atta met in the northeastern Spanish region of Tarragona in July 2001, when Garzon says last-minute details of the attacks were decided, including the date.

In September 2003, Garzon indicted 35 members of an alleged Spain-based al-Qaida cell and bin Laden as the mastermind of Sept. 11 on grounds that the attacks were planned in part in Spain.

Garzon later broadened the indictment to 40 people. Twenty-one of them are scheduled to go on trial on charges of terrorism over the next few weeks, although not all of them are charged with helping prepare the Sept. 11 attacks.

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