

Odd Happenings in Fallujah

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January 18, 2005 - "The soldiers are doing strange things in Fallujah," said one of my contacts in Fallujah who just returned. He was in his city checking on his home and just returned to Baghdad this evening.

Speaking on condition of anonymity he continued, "In the center of the Julan Quarter they are removing entire homes which have been bombed, meanwhile most of the homes that were bombed are left as they were. Why are they doing this?"

According to him, this was also done in the Nazal, Mualmeen, Jubail and Shuhada'a districts, and the military began to do this after Eid, which was after November 20th.

He told me he has watched the military use bulldozers to push the soil into piles and load it onto trucks to carry away. This was done in the Julan and Jimouriya quarters of the city, which is of course where the heaviest fighting occurred during the siege, as this was where resistance was the fiercest.

"At least two kilometers of soil were removed," he explained, "Exactly as they did at Baghdad Airport after the heavy battles there during the invasion and the Americans used their special weapons."

He explained that in certain areas where the military used "special munitions" 200 square meters of soil was being removed from each blast site.

In addition, many of his friends have told him that the military brought in water tanker trucks to power blast the streets, although he hadn't seen this himself.

"They went around to every house and have shot the water tanks," he continued, "As if they are trying to hide the evidence of chemical weapons in the water, but they only did this in some areas, such as Julan and in the souk (market) there as well."

He first saw this having been done after December 20th.

Again, this is reflective of stories I've been told by several refugees from Fallujah.

Just last December, a 35 year-old merchant from Fallujah, Abu Hammad, told me what he'd experienced when he was still in the city during the siege.

"The American warplanes came continuously through the night and bombed everywhere in Fallujah! It did not stop even for a moment! If the American forces did not find a target to

bomb, they used sound bombs just to terrorize the people and children. The city stayed in fear; I cannot give a picture of how panicked everyone was.”

“In the mornings I found Fallujah empty, as if nobody lives in it,” he’d said, “Even poisonous gases have been used in Fallujah-they used everything-tanks, artillery, infantry, poison gas. Fallujah has been bombed to the ground. Nothing is left.”

In Amiriyat al-Fallujah, a small city just outside Fallujah where many doctors from Fallujah have been practicing since they were unable to do so at Fallujah General Hospital, similar stories are being told.

Last month one refugee who had just arrived at the hospital in the small city explained that he’d watched the military bring in water tanker trucks to power blast some of the streets in Fallujah.

“Why are they doing this,” explained Ahmed (name changed for his protection), “To beautify Fallujah? No! They are covering their tracks from the horrible weapons they used in my city.”

Also last November, another Fallujah refugee from the Julan area, Abu Sabah told me, “They (US military) used these weird bombs that put up smoke like a mushroom cloud. Then small pieces fall from the air with long tails of smoke behind them.”

He explained that pieces of these bombs exploded into large fires that burnt people’s skin even when water was dumped on their bodies, which is the effect of phosphorous weapons, as well as napalm. “People suffered so much from these, both civilians and fighters alike,” he said.

My friend Suthir (name changed to protect identity) was a member of one of the Iraqi Red Crescent relief convoys that was allowed into Fallujah at the end of November.

“I’m sure the Americans committed bad things there, but who can discover and say this,” she said when speaking of what she saw of the devastated city, “They didn’t allow us to go to the Julan area or any of the others where there was heavy fighting, and I’m sure that is where the horrible things took place.”

“The Americans didn’t let us in the places where everyone said there was napalm used,” she added, “Julan and those places where the heaviest fighting was, nobody is allowed to go there.”

On 30 November the US military prevented an aid convoy from reaching Fallujah. This aid convoy was sent by the Iraqi Ministry of Health, but was told by soldiers at a checkpoint to return in “8 or 9 days,” reported AP.

Dr. Ibrahim al-Kubaisi who was with the relief team told reporters at that time, “There is a terrible crime going in Fallujah and they do not want anybody to know.”

With the military maintaining strict control over who enters Fallujah, the truth of what weapons were used remains difficult to find.

Meanwhile, people who lived in different districts of Fallujah continue to tell the same stories.

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