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Army Is Reluctant to Flaunt Photos of Hussein's Sons

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BAGHDAD, Iraq, July 23 — The United States holds irrefutable proof that Saddam Hussein's sons are dead, including dental records and visual confirmation from four of the deposed dictator's aides, but a skeptical Iraqi public held out today for photographs and the occupying authority did not broadcast them.

Lt. Gen. Ricardo S. Sanchez, the commanding officer here, admitted that the release of the grisly photos, which he was carrying with him today and exhibited briefly, presented a predicament. On the one hand, a public display could help lessen fear among Iraqis that the former government remains a threat; on the other, the military does not want to appear to be gloating.

[Speaking to reporters Wednesday night on Capitol Hill, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld was asked whether any decision had been made to release photographs of the bodies of Mr. Hussein's sons. "There will be pictures released," he replied, although he declined to say when.]

The United States called the deaths of Mr. Hussein's sons, Uday and Qusay, in a shootout in the northern city of Mosul on Tuesday a turning point in the postwar occupation of Iraq that could demoralize those loyal to the deposed government. But any hope of quick improvement in the almost daily armed attacks against Americans was short-lived; two American soldiers were killed in more attacks today.

Even with the American assurances, ordinary Iraqis remained decidedly unconvinced that the two Hussein sons, responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Iraqis, were themselves gone. Many were reluctant to accept the news until they had some visual proof. Some expressed disappointment that the sons had not been captured so they could suffer the same humiliation of captivity they had inflicted on others.

Some said the deaths of the men further confirmed a seemingly endless cycle of blood in Iraq that the United States appeared to be perpetuating.

"I can't see how the death of two or three or five is a great day for Iraq," said Wamidh Nadhmi, a political science professor at Baghdad University. "I was hoping that revenge and counterrevenge would stop one day in this poor country."

General Sanchez was carrying the photos of the Hussein sons in a manila folder, showing them briefly to a small group of reporters after a news conference here about the attack on a mansion in the northern city of Mosul that killed the two men and two others.

The photos, printed on standard sized letter paper, showed the battered, bloodied heads and upper torsos of Uday and Qusay Hussein. Uday, 39, had a five-inch purple gash running up from his mouth along

the side of his nose.

Forensic specialists made only a 90 percent match with Uday's teeth because some had been damaged by whatever had caused the wound, the general said. Wound marks on Uday's body matched those of X-rays taken after a 1996 assassination attempt, he said.

The two men had slightly wild appearances because both had grown bushy beards and Uday had recently shaved his head, which was covered with short fuzz when he died. Qusay, 37, normally carefully groomed, had let his hair grow. Blood clogged the nostrils and eyes of both men, who were recognizable as they lay on a floor, eyes closed.

General Sanchez said four senior members of the Hussein government now in custody at Baghdad International Airport, where the bodies were taken, had separately been shown the bodies and confirmed that they were Saddam's sons. The four were Tariq Aziz, the former deputy prime minister and foreign minister; Abd Hamoud al-Tikriti, the former president's personal secretary; and two of the men's uncles, Watban and Barzan al-Tikriti.

General Sanchez said that finding Saddam Hussein remained the main focus of American forces now, although the death of the two sons represented a "significant change" that he hoped would encourage more Iraqis to cooperate with the manhunt.

Although American forces are still combing the ruins of the Mosul residence for clues about the whereabouts of Saddam Hussein, the general said, it was impossible to guess if he might also be around Mosul. "I wouldn't make any extrapolation from this," he said. "Iraq is a huge country."

General Sanchez said he believed Uday and Qusay probably died when soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division launched 10 TOW missiles at the mansion during the final phase of an attack lasting more than three hours. The house was surrounded by 10 a.m. Tuesday, 12 hours after an Iraqi tipped the Americans that the two were hiding there. The general denied previous reports that a videotape had been delivered showing the two men.

The group inside the mansion fired at American troops with AK-47 assault rifles, but after four of his men were wounded the commander on the ground directed withering fire into the house.

When his men entered the home, much eroded by the assault, at around 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, they still faced fire from one person in a fortified second-floor bedroom, General Sanchez said. The gunman turned out to be the youngest of the four males found in the house.

The general said he had yet to be identified. But Arab press reports said that it was Mustapha, the teenage son of Qusay, and that the fourth man was Uday's bodyguard.

In other developments today, Amnesty International issued a report sharply criticizing the allies' handling of arrests and criminal detentions since the war ended, including accusations that soldiers had tortured Iraqi detainees and denied them access to lawyers or relatives.

The two American soldiers who died today were killed in road mine attacks, one from the Third Armored Cavalry Regiment near Ramadi and the other from the 101st Airborne outside Mosul.

An audio tape, apparently made by Saddam Hussein before the death of his sons, urged Iraqis to continue battling American forces. The tape was broadcast by Al Arabiya satellite television.

In the towns of Ramadi and Falluja west of Baghdad, part of the Sunni-dominated swath of Iraq where attacks on American troops have occurred with almost predictable frequency, some residents and soldiers said they doubted that the deaths of Mr. Hussein's sons would quickly dampen the violence.

Unlike Baghdad, where celebratory gunfire erupted all over the city on news of the deaths of Uday and Qusay, Falluja was quiet on Tuesday night because people doubted the veracity of the reports, said police officers at the central precinct house.

"This is rumors, media, no one is sure," said Muhammad Jasim Ali, 35, a Falluja police officer. "They will have to film the corpses for people to believe them."

Mr. Ali and other Falluja police officers dismissed the idea that attacks on American forces would abate any time soon.

Mr. Ali himself said he was saddened to hear about the possibility of the deaths because "they were the president's sons." He said he was sure that others who felt as he did would fight the Americans with renewed fervor. "If Uday and Qusay were killed, we will take our revenge," Mr. Ali said. "The attacks of course will increase."

Others in Falluja agreed, adding that the resistance to the American presence would persist because it was based in Islam, not allegiance to the old government. "In Falluja, we don't care about this," Abdul Majid Noori, 27, said of the death of Mr. Hussein's sons. "We care about our religion."

Sitting in a sign shop festooned with banners in English that read, "Our aim is not to kill you, but our independence is more precious than your blood," Mr. Noori continued: "In our religion, the infidel has no right to relieve the oppression of believers. If we want to change the regime, we'll do it ourselves."