

washingtonpost.com

## U.S. Seizes Bodyguards Of Hussein

Leader's Two Dead Sons Cleaned Up for Display

By Pamela Constable  
Washington Post Foreign Service  
Saturday, July 26, 2003; Page A13

BAGHDAD, July 25 -- American troops today captured between five and 10 people, believed to be Saddam Hussein's bodyguards, in a raid near the northern city of Tikrit that suggested U.S. forces may be getting closer to locating the former Iraqi leader.

"We continue to tighten the noose," Maj. Gen. Ray Odierno, commander of the army's 4th Infantry Division, told reporters, speaking from Tikrit, Hussein's home town and still a stronghold of his supporters.

Meanwhile, U.S. military officials displayed the bullet-riddled but cosmetically repaired corpses of Hussein's two sons to a group of journalists and television camera crews here, hoping to convince the Iraqi public that Uday, 39, and Qusay, 37, had indeed been killed in a military raid Tuesday.

But some Iraqis remained skeptical of the American claim, pointing out that U.S. doctors could have performed cosmetic surgery on people who were not the brothers. Other Iraqis complained it offended Islamic custom that the men's battered bodies were shown on TV and had not yet been buried.

Military officials here said the capture of the bodyguards in Tikrit was significant for two reasons. The officials said they had learned from interrogating other detainees in recent weeks that Hussein's bodyguards have played a major role coordinating attacks on U.S. troops in the Tikrit area.

The officials also said that the bodyguards were thought to possess current information about the movements of top fugitive members of the Hussein government, especially about the safe houses they use. Some officials said they believed Hussein may be hiding in the town of Beiji, north of Tikrit, but others disagree.

The raid in Tikrit was prompted by a tip, officials said. Odierno, speaking via satellite to reporters at the Pentagon, said the deaths of Hussein's sons were already leading people to come forward with information. "We're showing them no one of the old regime is going to survive," he said.

U.S. officials prepared the bodies of Uday and Qusay for display today so their faces would look as recognizable as possible. Uday's long beard, possibly an attempted disguise, was cut shorter, and Qusay's beard had been shaved clean, as was his custom.

The faces of both men had been repaired and looked more normal than the bruised and bloody heads shown in snapshots broadcast on television Thursday. Their bodies had been autopsied and embalmed, and U.S. military surgeons displayed a metal plate they said they had removed from Uday's leg, which had been implanted after he was wounded in an assassination attempt in 1996.

Members of the Iraqi Governing Council were also shown the bodies today, and a team of Iraqi doctors was said to have identified them through dental records. U.S. officials have said several senior aides to Hussein confirmed the identities of the men this week.

Officials said that Qusay died from bullet wounds to the head, and Uday from a blunt head injury. A large wound in his head had been sewn shut today. A rumor circulated in Iraq this week that Uday had committed suicide, but U.S. medical officials here said they did not think that was case.

The bodies are being kept in an Air Force morgue at the airport, and U.S. officials said they would turn them over to family members who come to claim them.

The two brothers were close confidantes of their father, and many Iraqis believed that the three would probably hide together. Uday, known as a violent and fast-living bully, was more widely known and feared by the public. Qusay, who operated more quietly, wielded far more power as a senior security official in the regime.

Despite the Americans' efforts, many Iraqis remained unconvinced the men were dead, even after seeing close-range TV footage today from a U.S. military tent at Baghdad's international airport, where the brothers' bodies were laid out on adjoining cots, half draped by blue sheets. Their faces resembled the brothers but were waxy and mask-like.

"Yesterday I saw the photos, and today I saw the dolls," said Mohammed Husain, 33, a portrait painter. "It was difficult for the Americans to make people believe, so they made wax dolls like a museum." He said he would not be convinced of the men's deaths until he saw televised footage of the U.S. attack on a villa in the city of Mosul where they had hidden.

Others disagreed, saying they were certain Uday and Qusay were dead after they saw the faces and bodies of the men.

"I believe it is Uday and Qusay," said Rada Saloomi, 37, an art gallery owner in the capital. "I know it is forbidden to show the dead on television, but the Iraqi people wanted this, so they could have the truth."

Sabah Shalal, 36, a former security officer who said he had often seen the brothers over the past 15 years, said the picture he saw of Uday was "definitely" not of him. "The Americans can change a face and a picture, they are professionals," said Shalal, scoffing at a news broadcast shown in Beiji, also considered a Hussein stronghold.

But Shalal's older brother Hashim, also watching the news, disagreed. "I am sure it's them. We cannot deny it," he said. "The Americans aren't stupid enough to show the pictures if it's not them."

*Correspondent Anthony Shadid and staff writer Thomas E. Ricks contributed to this report.*

© 2003 The Washington Post Company