

UN, pointed out in a secret letter to Mr Bush and Mr Blair, a major military assault leading to an escalation in violence "could be very disruptive for Iraq's political transition", and is "likely" to have a "negative impact... on the prospects for encouraging a broader participation by Iraqis in the political process, including in the elections." (*Washington Post*, 6 Nov., p. A19)

Predictably, the assault led immediately to a call by the influential Muslim Clerics Association for Sunnis to boycott the elections, which would be held "over the corpses of those killed in Fallujah". (*Telegraph*, 10 Nov., p. 10)

### THE BRUTAL LIES - THE TERRORISTS' SAFE HAVEN

Another justification was the need to break the hold of 'the terrorists' in Fallujah. However, in Oct., '**local insurgent leaders voted overwhelmingly to accept broad conditions set by the Iraqi government**, including demands that they eject foreign fighters from the city, turn over all heavy weapons, dismantle illegal checkpoints and allow the Iraqi National Guard to enter the city. In turn, the insurgents set their own conditions, which included a halt to U.S. attacks on the city and acknowledgment by the military that women and children have been among the casualties in U.S. strikes.'

 (*Washington Post*, 28 Oct., p. A21) **Rejected.**

A later offer was put forward by a (mainly Sunni) coalition, including the Muslim Clerics' Association, for 'a plan to establish the rule of law in those areas through peaceful means', on the basis of six measures, 'including a demand that U.S. forces remain confined to bases in the month before balloting'. This was 'a dramatic shift' by Sunni groups which had previously insisted that no election would be legitimate until Western troops left Iraq.

"**This initiative is very significant,**" said an official involved in establishing the transitional government. "They're no longer saying, 'We're not participating because the country is occupied.' They're saying, 'The government is not right. The only way we can make it right is by elections.' **If you look at their demands, they're not impossible.** They are things that can be discussed." Larry Diamond, who served in the U.S.-led occupation authority, said "**If there's a chance that this could be the beginning of political transformation that could change the situation on the ground, I think we've got to take it.**" (*Washington Post*, 6 Nov., p. A01) These offers have been brushed aside and erased from the record. They might not have worked, but they were not tried.

# ONSLAUGHT

## The Attack On Fallujah

JNV Anti-War Briefing 69 (11 Nov. 2004)

### THE BRUTAL WEAPONS

The long-feared US ground assault on Fallujah began on Mon. 8 Nov., with air and artillery attacks, including the dropping of eight **2,000-pound bombs**. "Usually we keep the gloves on," said the head of the US 1st Infantry Division's Task Force 2-2 tactical operations command center. "**For this operation, we took the gloves off.**" "Some artillery guns fired **white phosphorous rounds** that create a screen of fire that cannot be extinguished with water. Insurgents reported being attacked with a substance that melted their skin.' (*Washington Post*, 10 Nov., p. A01) 'White phosphorus shells lit up the sky as armour drove through the breach and sent flaming material on to suspect insurgent haunts.' (*Telegraph*, 9 Nov., p. 1)

Jackie Spinner of the *Post* visited a US unit with two M109A6 Paladin self-propelled 155mm howitzers. 'The Paladin fires rocket-assisted shells that can travel up to 22 miles and regular shells that can cover 13 miles. The shells typically strike within about five yards of their target and are likely to kill anyone within 55 yards of the point of impact.' Sgt. Fladymir Napoleon, 25: "**It's a great thing blowing stuff up. We're getting the city free...**"

Paladin crew chief, Brian Blakey patted a 155mm round: "Three of these, and I can take out a whole building." Just this one unit's two artillery pieces 'fired more than 300 rounds in the first three days of the battle.'

'At the other gun a short distance away, Spec. John Kennedy, 26, of Dallas, asked [ Sgt. 1st Class Johnny] Dotson about the rounds his crew had fired that morning. "What were we shooting at?" he asked. "Did we get it?" Yes, Dotson told him. **They hit the mosque. Twenty confirmed killed.** "**We really get no glory,**" said Staff Sgt. Jason Moye, 25, of Phoenix.' (*Washington Post*, 11 Nov., p. A33)

'The American military has been using novel and devastating methods to clear Fallujahs' streets.' Including the rocket-fired 350-foot-long string of plastic explosives known as Miclic, which can clear a lane through a minefield 8 meters wide and 100 meters long. 'The Miclic is normally designed for open spaces because it generates tremendous pressure, setting off mines over a large area. In Fallujah the Miclic, fired from 300 to 400 metres, is used to detonate roadside bombs and car bombs. It is highly effective but also

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indiscriminate, and not normally considered suitable for an urban environment.' (*Times*, 10 Nov., p. 9; Miclic details from [globalsecurity.org](http://globalsecurity.org))

### THE BRUTAL WARRIORS

'After seven months in Iraq's Sunni triangle, for many American soldiers the opportunity to avenge dead friends by taking a life was a moment of sheer exhilaration. As they approached their "holding position", from where hours later they would advance into the city, they picked off insurgents on the rooftops and in windows.' After calling in mortar fire on a suspected insurgent site, Sgt James Anyett shouted: "**Battle Damage Assessment – nothing. Building's gone. I got my kills. I'm coming down. I just love my job.**" (*Telegraph*, 9 Nov., p. 4)

In April, a senior British officer serving in Iraq said of the US attitude to the local people, 'They don't see the Iraqi people the way we see them. They view them as **untermenschen**. They are not concerned about the Iraqi loss of life in the way the British are. Their attitude towards the Iraqis is tragic, it's awful.' The *Sunday Telegraph*: 'The phrase *untermenschen*—literally "under-people"—was brought to prominence by Adolf Hitler in his book *Mein Kampf*, published in 1925. He used the term to describe those he regarded as racially inferior: Jews, Slaves and gypsies.' (11 Apr.)

### THE HUMAN COST

'Randy Gangle, a retired US marine colonel recently returned from the coalition base outside Falluja, said... the US military expected [civilian deaths] to number in the **hundreds**, not thousands.' (*Guardian*, 9 Nov., p. 2)

In order to manage perceptions of the human cost of the attack, the first objective was Fallujah's main hospital. 'One unnamed senior American officer also admitted that the hospital had become a "centre of propaganda," reflecting the military's frustration at the high death toll doctors frequently announce after American bombing raids. It was accounts of the **hundreds** killed during the first assault on Falluja in April that brought the operation to a rapid halt.' (*Guardian*, 9 Nov., p. 3)

'Sami al-Jumaili, a doctor at the main Falluja hospital who escaped arrest when it was taken on Monday, said the city was running out of supplies and only a few clinics remained open. "There is not a single surgeon in Falluja. We had **one ambulance hit by US fire** and a doctor wounded. There are scores of injured civilians in their homes whom we can't move." (*FT*, 10 Nov., p. 9) Having destroyed one clinic before the assault (*Observer*, 7 Nov., p. 2), US forces reportedly destroyed an emergency hospital after taking the main hospital: '**Twenty Iraqi doctors and dozens of civilians were**

**killed in a US airstrike that hit a clinic** in Fallujah, according to an Iraqi doctor who said he survived the strike.' (*Independent*, 11 Nov., p. 4)

Estimates of civilians remaining in Fallujah on 7 Nov. varied from 100,000 (US military, *FT*, 9 Nov., p. 10) to 60,000 (Sunni group, *Independent*, 10 Nov., p. 5). Estimates for the number of fighters left in Falluja before the assault varied 'from 600 to 6,000,' meaning that the overwhelming majority of people in Fallujah were thought to be non-combatants. It was reported that '**Anyone still in the city will be regarded as a potential insurgent.**' (*Observer*, 7 Nov., p. 18) A threat to kill every human being in Fallujah.

At a hospital in Baghdad, the families of civilian victims evacuated from Fallujah 'claimed that **US forces were bombing outlying villages where refugees have regrouped** as well as the city.' (*Times*, 11 Nov., p. 9)

"From a humanitarian point of view, it is a disaster, there is no other way to describe it," Firdoos al-Ubaidi, of the Red Crescent, said on 10 Nov. "We have asked for permission from the Americans to go into the city and help the people there but **we haven't heard anything back from them. There's no medicine, no water, no electricity.**"' (*Times*, 11 Nov., p. 9)

### GHAITH ABOUD

Fadel al-Badrani, the only unembedded Western reporter in Falluja, reported the fate of Ghaith Abboud for Reuters: '**Mohammed Abboud said he watched his nine-year-old son bleed to death at their Falluja home yesterday, unable to take him to hospital as fighting raged in the streets and bombs rained down.** "My son got shrapnel in his stomach when our house was hit at dawn, but we couldn't take him for treatment," said Mr Abboud, a teacher.' (*Guardian*, 11 Nov. 2004, p. 4)

'In two months – if the elections go ahead – Mohammed Abboud will be able to play a part in what they call democracy. Today, with his remaining family, he sits in a house damaged by the bomb that killed his child. He said: "We just bandaged his stomach and gave him water, but he was losing a lot of blood. He died this afternoon." It was the highest price of all to pay for the right to vote.' (*Independent*, 10 Nov., p. 5)

### THE BRUTAL LIES - THE ELECTION

The assault on Fallujah was justified as necessary to create the conditions for elections due in Jan. 2005. But as Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the

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