

# Fort Riley honors five who died in Iraq; total dead nears 40

By JOHN MILBURN

*Associated Press Writer*  
FORT RILEY (AP) — A year ago, this Army post honored the first of its soldiers killed in the war in Iraq. Since then, 34 others have died, making memorial services more familiar here.

Several hundred people filled a chapel Wednesday to honor the latest casualties, five men in their 20s who died last week in a roadside bombing.

Their memorial service occurred as troops still in Iraq faced the fiercest fighting since Baghdad fell last year, and several officers who spoke during the ceremony mentioned

“Freedom has a cost. We feel the pain of that cost this morning. We don’t expect young men to die.””

Lt. Col. Tim Willoughby,  
chaplain of 1st Infantry Division

continuing conflict.

And, during the ceremony’s quietest moments, the deep rumbling of fire from an artillery practice session on the post could be heard every few minutes.

“This has become a familiar ex-

perience for us at Fort Riley,” said Lt. Col. Tim Willoughby, chaplain for the Army’s 1st Infantry Division.

“It’s painfully familiar but it certainly has not become routine, nor will it ever be so.”

The five soldiers, killed March 31 in a roadside bombing, were 1st Lt. Doyle M. Hufstедler, 25, of Abilene, Texas; Spc. Sean R. Mitchell, 24, of Youngsville, Pa.; Spc. Michael G. Karr Jr., 23, of San Antonio, Texas; Pfc. Cleston C. Raney, 20, of Rupert, Idaho; and Pvt. Brandon L. Davis, 20, of Cumberland, Md.

Hufstедler’s wife, Leslie; Mitchell’s wife, Denise; and an aunt of Raney’s, Gloria Trivitt, attended.

They met with Maj. Gen. Dennis Hardy, the post’s commander, before the service began. The birth of Hufstедler’s first child — a daughter — is expected later this spring.

Since the war began on March 20, 2003, at least 600 U.S. troops have died.

The first Fort Riley soldier to die in the war was Sgt. Jacob Butler, of Wellsville, on April 1, 2003.

“Freedom has a cost,” Willoughby said. “We feel the pain of that cost this morning. We don’t expect young men to die.”

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius also attended the service, along with legislators. After the service, Sebelius noted that she is the mother of two sons, ages 19 and 22.

“As I look at these young faces, I think that they could be my young sons or their friends,” she said.

About 4,400 Fort Riley soldiers remain in Iraq. The men who died were members of the 1st Engineer Battalion, 1st Brigade of the 1st Infantry Division. Their unit deployed in September.

The battalion, organized in 1846, has fought in every American war since then except the Korean War in 1950-53.

The 1st Division flag on the altar was adorned with battle ribbons from legendary fights in Sicily and at Kasserine Pass in Africa during World War II.

The service concluded with a roll call. Sgt. First Class Frederick Wilkins, a member of the 1st Battalion’s rear detachment on post, read the names of his comrades — and was answered by silence.

Wilkins, a liaison between soldiers and their families, said he was in shock. The battalion has lost 10 soldiers since September but, “You’re still surprised to have soldiers over there die.”

Following the services, soldiers filed to the altar where photographs of the soldiers rested beside five pairs of boots, five M-16 rifles and five tan helmets.

Officers and enlisted men paused to offer one final salute, one final prayer.

# Shiite militias controlling parts of three Iraqi cities

By LEE KEATH

*Associated Press Writers*  
BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) — Shiite Muslim militias held partial control Thursday over three southern Iraqi cities, while Sunni insurgents killed a U.S. Marine in the battle for Fallujah. In escalating violence, gunmen kidnapped three Japanese and eight South Korean civilians.

In a videotape broadcast to the Arab world by Al-Jazeera, kidnappers armed with automatic rifles and swords threatened to kill the blindfolded Japanese hostages unless Tokyo removed its troops from Iraq. Japan said it had “no reason” to withdraw.

Three explosions rocked central Baghdad, with smoke rising from the Green Zone — the sealed-off neighborhood where the U.S.-led coalition has its headquarters. The military did not immediately report any casualties.

Iraq’s interior minister, who leads police and security forces, resigned at the request of top U.S. administrator, L. Paul Bremer, to maintain balance between Sunni and Shiite factions on the governing council. It was unclear if the resignation of Nuri al-Badran was also connected with the failure of Iraqi police to

confront insurgents that coalition forces are battling on two fronts.

The militia led by radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr has full control over the city of Kut and partial control in Najaf, but coalition forces will move soon to break their hold, said Army Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, the top U.S. general in Iraq said.

Residents of Kufa said militiamen also control that southern city by holding police stations and government buildings.

Sanchez said there appeared to be links “at the lowest levels” between the Shiite militia — which has been battling coalition forces in at least a half-dozen southern cities this week — and Sunni Arab insurgents who have long fought U.S. troops in central Iraq cities such as Fallujah and Ramadi.

Ukrainian troops were forced to withdraw from their bases in Kut on Wednesday, but Sanchez said coalition forces would retake it “imminently.”

He suggested that the presence of hundreds of thousands of Shiite pilgrims in Najaf for a religious occasion this weekend was hampering coalition forces from moving against militiamen there.

“We are very cognizant of the religious ceremonies.”

Army Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez  
top U.S. general in Iraq

“We are very cognizant of the religious ceremonies,” he said.

Polish and Bulgarian soldiers drove off Shiites who attacked them near the municipal hall in Karbala south of Baghdad during all-night battles, a Polish spokesman said.

The attacks began about 11 p.m. Wednesday and continued until nearly sunrise, Strzelecki said. The attackers, loyal to al-Sadr, used machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades and small arms during fighting that the spokesman described as heavy.

In the Sunni Muslim stronghold of Fallujah, U.S. Marines fought insurgents for a second day. One U.S. Marine was reported killed by the military, although it released no details.

Marines battled again around the Abdel-Aziz al-Samarrai mosque, which Marine Capt. James Edge

said insurgents were again using as a base despite a six-hour battle Wednesday to uproot them. Helicopters were deployed to support the Marines, he said.

Capping Wednesday’s battle, a U.S. Cobra helicopter fired a missile at the base of the mosque’s minaret, and an F-16 dropped a laser-guided bomb at the wall, allowing Marines to move in and seize the site, Lt. Col. Brennan Byrne said.

Fighting this week in Fallujah, Ramadi and elsewhere has left 36 Americans and at least 459 Iraqis dead. The director of the city’s hospital, Taher Al-Issawai, said the figure included more than 280 Iraqis killed since the Marines’ siege against insurgents in Fallujah, west of Baghdad, began early Monday.

Lawmakers in Tokyo said the Japanese civilians — identified as two male journalists and a female

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