

ONE DAY IN IRAQ

This weekend WikiLeaks released nearly 400,000 secret US army documents to international media groups, including the Observer and the Guardian. Here we focus on the US war logs for 17 October, 2006 – 24 hours of car bombs and mortars, of tortured corpses being found in every major city, of snipers, kidnaps and death squads. Another ordinary day of attrition in Iraq...



October 2006 was not the worst month in Iraq for Iraqi or US casualties, but it was one of the worst for both. There was no hiding from the world the scale of the carnage then – but only now, when it is possible for the first time for a non-military outsider to peer into the classified fine grain of a day in the life of the war, is it apparent quite how hideous the attrition was becoming, hour by hour, minute by minute.

We chose 17 October as one of the days when the US military lost the most men. It wasn't one of those days when a gigantic bomb killed scores of civilians. Sure enough, the next morning the headlines focused on American casualties: "US loses 10 killed in Iraq."

When you look at the war logs, however, the American deaths are only scattered reports in a numbing sequence of corpses found scattered in the streets of Iraq like fallen leaves. In all, 136 Iraqis died or were found dead on this day – 97 civilians, 19 members of the security forces and 10 suspected insurgents. Really there were two wars going on, both triggered by the US-British invasion: a war between US-led uniformed forces and Iraqi insurgents, and a shadowy civil war, a war for power, territory and revenge between Iraq's dominant sects, the Sunni and the Shia. Both wars were going badly for the US and its British junior partner.

Rumours of Shia death squads operating within the police were

widely believed, and on this very day, not mentioned in the logs, the Shia-dominated Iraqi government sacked its two most senior police commanders. In this civil war US forces didn't know whether to intervene or stand aside; in the days leading up to 17 October US troops did nothing while the town of Balad was torn apart by an intercommunal bloodbath.

In Anbar province, the town of Ramadi remained a full-on war zone for US troops. New insurgent tactics, particularly the use of a new kind of homemade bomb, the "explosively formed penetrator", had the US commanders worried.

From the perspective of 2010 we can see that October 2006 was a critical turning point in the Bush-Blair wars. The two conflicts in Iraq were gaining in intensity just as Washington and London were ramping up their engagement in Afghanistan. Commentators were describing the Iraq insurgency as a new Tet offensive, referring to the Vietnamese attacks on US troops in 1968 that caused the American public to lose heart in that war. The midterm congressional elections in the US were two weeks away and the Democrats were winning support with attack ads showing footage of the horror the Iraq invasion had led to.

Short of troops, the generals were

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shuffling their brigades around Iraq like hucksters in a shell game. To make matters worse the bloody autumn of 2006 came at the time of the annual troop rotation. US soldiers and marines were either hanging on, hoping to end their tours without getting injured, or were newly arrived. Brave, trained and well equipped they might have been, but you can't help wondering if the 24th Regiment of Marines, whose soldiers have ordinary careers and normally only train at weekends, deserved to be hurled fresh into the cauldron of Falluja.

This was the season in Iraq that ended Donald Rumsfeld's career, brought the Democrats to power in Congress and forced the US to start sending more troops to Iraq for the "surge" three months later.

The war logs record more than 400 separate incidents for 17 October 2006, only half of which we detail here. Omitted are the dozens of IEDs that were found before they went off or didn't injure anyone; numerous small-time shellings and shootings; and discoveries of arms caches by US forces, none of which was large.

The war logs themselves are incomplete and contain duplicate entries, not all of which we have necessarily been able to weed out. Many stories, particularly those involving the deaths of civilians, are left unfinished. Some events reported elsewhere are puzzlingly left out.

The 10 US deaths recorded for 17 October 2006 include one road accident. But there was an 11th combat death the log doesn't mention: that of 53-year-old Ronald Paulsen, a civil affairs sergeant and warehouse loadman in civilian life who, according to a Pentagon release a week later, died on 17 October in Tarmiya when a bomb went off near his vehicle.



Iraqi Christian women pick their way through the site of a recently bombed market on 17 October 2006. Photograph by Sabah Arar/AFP

08.41 'Roadside bomb damages US vehicle near Tuz. It is one of four devices found or exploded in the past two minutes'

It's just after midnight in Baghdad on 17 October, 2006. A new war day begins. US military clerks, the war's white-collar workers, make their first key-strokes in the log: Murder in the vicinity of Baghdad. One unknown civilian corpse found shot in the head. The body was taken to Justice Medical. No further information.

In the darkness they are already fighting when midnight comes around. Insurgents have rocketed a US infantry base south of Baghdad and set fire to oxygen tanks. The Americans fire back and a civilian is wounded by shrapnel.

00.30 South-west of Falluja, an eight-vehicle convoy of US military engineers creeps along a highway, checking for roadside bombs, or IEDs. Insurgents have hidden an old artillery shell wired to a pressure switch in a hole in the middle of the road, covered in branches. The first vehicle, a mine-proof South African truck, rolls over the IED and it goes off, badly damaging the truck, but no one is hurt. It is the first of dozens of IED attacks today, like yesterday, like tomorrow.

00.45 In Mosul, Iraqi and US troops seize a suspect from his home and take him away for questioning.

02.10 Murder, write the loggers. Haider Abdul Desher al Tamimi, Haider Ali Jabar al Majsoi, Noufal Hassan Khelaf al

Hassani and Fawaz Abdul Mahdi Taher al Asavi were reported missing and later found murdered.

02.39 "Associates" of a suspected insurgent, a father and son, arrested in Falluja.

02.48 Marines in Falluja arrest a man seen digging who runs from the beam of their torch.

03.15 US troops in Ramadi see armed insurgents run into a house. They pepper it with cannon fire, but never find out if they hit anyone.

03.30 Five suspected insurgents arrested in Hit.

04.10 Pre-dawn arrests continue in Hit: eight more Iraqis are detained.

04.30 US soldiers in Baghdad detain a man out after curfew and detect TNT on his skin and clothes. He is arrested.

05.30 Botched suicide bombing, Kirkuk.

06.00 Unknown assailants kill four Iraqis and wound another in Balad. A child is kidnapped in Hasmiyya.

06.17 Insurgents shell a coalition base near Mosul, but US forces can't find the shells because "the Albanian tower guards misjudged the distance".

06.25 More information on the 05.30 suicide bombing. Two insurgents were driving an explosives-packed Mazda into Kirkuk when it exploded prematurely, killing both men. "The driver," write the loggers, "was handcuffed to the wheel." In Baghdad, a bomb dog sniffs out an IED, which explodes before it can

be defused. The loggers don't record the fate of the dog.

06.30 In Baghdad, a car bomb badly injures the financial director of a seed company and his driver.

06.50 Unknown male corpse found shot in the head in Shulla, west Baghdad.

06.54 An IED is set off as a US convoy heads out of Baghdad to Falluja. The blast created by 300-500lb of explosives destroys a Humvee carrying four soldiers and an Iraqi interpreter.

07.15 A medical evacuation helicopter takes off for the site of the Humvee.

07.21 The medevac touches down.

07.30 The medevac is cancelled. All four US soldiers – Russell Culbertson, Joseph Dumas, Christopher Loudon and David Unger – and their Iraqi interpreter, identified only as "Jack", had died instantly.

07.30 A man named Amir Hamoudi is found shot in the head in Baghdad. A woman doctor, Bushra al-Manasir, is shot dead by two assassins on a motorbike in Basra. An unidentified male body is found decayed in Diwaniya.

07.40 Six Iraqis are injured by a bomb explosion near the Al Shaab stadium in Baghdad. An off-duty Iraqi policeman is wounded in a shooting near Baquba.

08.00 Outside Ramadi, police arrest four men carrying a stick of plastic explosive, a grenade fuse, a blasting cap and an explosive booster. Dawad Salman, male,

age unknown, is found in a west Baghdad street with a gunshot wound to the head.

08.04 In Baghdad, two mortar shells land in the Karada district, killing a policeman and a civilian.

08.10 Georgian troops near Baquba observe two Iraqis being kidnapped and bundled into a black sedan. They don't intervene, but tell the Iraqi police.

08.10 Murder of a civilian in Hamamiyat. His hands are tied behind his back and his head has been cut off. In Sabat, Baghdad, 1st Armoured Division reports a murder. Religious sect of victim: unknown. Male, approximately 35 years, 5ft 5in, 125-135lb, one gunshot to the head, hands tied behind back. The loggers conclude 'Summary: 1x murder event. 1x local national killed in action. 0x damage. Closed.'

08.20 Marines in Ramadi report the first RPG attack of the day. The RPG is a 50-year-old Soviet weapon made partly of wood and functioning with the help of gunpowder that sends a papaya-shaped grenade screaming towards an opponent at 600mph. Two RPG projectiles and 500 Kalashnikov bullets smack into the perimeter wall of the marines' observation post. They pour hundreds of rounds back but there is no sign they hit anyone.

08.23 A convoy carrying reconstruction materials is hit by a roadside bomb. A civilian in the convoy is injured and a gun truck damaged.

08.30 Unidentified dead man without

head or hands found in a river in Qadisiya province.

08.30 Two Iraqis arrested near the Syrian border on suspicion of aiding the insurgency. They are to be transported to the Rawah detention facility for questioning by the 'Human Exploitation Team'.

08.39 A call comes in from a US Apache helicopter gunship which has seen a green station wagon, heading west on one of Baghdad's arterial motorways, being strafed by a passing white sedan. The station wagon comes to a halt and the car heads south into the stamping ground of the US 14th Cavalry. The Apache asks for permission to fire on the white car.

08.40 Mortars strike an Iraqi police post in Baghdad, killing one policeman and one civilian. Air controllers give the

Apache the go-ahead to shoot. The helicopter fires 40 shells at the car.

08.41 An IED, one of four to have been reported found or exploded in the previous two minutes, damages a US infantry vehicle near Tuz in Kirkuk province.

08.43 Hamamiyat, north-west of Baghdad. US cavalry find a dead body, shot once in the arm and once in the head.

08.45 A convoy from the British private security firm Aegis is hit by an IED south west of Samarra. One civilian is slightly hurt and a vehicle damaged.

08.49 West Baghdad. Murder of civilian. Locals say a suspicious red Volkswagen was seen in the area before they heard gunshots.

08.50 Taji, north of Baghdad, 2 unknown civilian corpses found shot in the head.

08.55 Member of Iraqi police counter-terror unit shot and injured in Baghdad.

09.05 North of Hadiitha, US marines come across two artillery shells buried in the middle of the road, wired to explode. They follow a wire and arrest a suspected insurgent sitting on top of a nearby building.

09.10 A US army foot patrol passing Baghdad's University of Law in the Adhamiya district comes under fire. A bullet strikes Staff Sergeant Garth Sizemore in the upper left leg, passes through his body and comes out the other side. He is taken to the closest US base for treatment.

09.30 Insurgents shoot and kill Abdul

Rudha al-Maliki, a member of the Baghdad mayor's office. Elsewhere in the city, Iraqi soldier Hussam Kadhim is wounded in the right hand by a sniper. In the south of the capital, a lunch truck arrives two hours early at a checkpoint manned by Iraqi police and US military mentors. As Iraqis come towards the truck for food, a blue Volkswagen races towards it and detonates with the force of 500lb of explosive, killing the driver and one other Iraqi and injuring seven. Insurgents begin firing at the US-Iraqi group, who shoot back. Helicopters shudder overhead.

09.35 Sgt Sizemore dies of his wounds. As he is dying in Baghdad, US marines in Ramadi see an Iraqi 500 yards away with a Kalashnikov slung on his back aiming an RPG at their position. They open fire and wound him. Later a marine patrol picks up a blood trail but never finds the insurgent.

09.37 Troops from the 14th Cavalry reach the white car shot up by the Apache. One of the presumed insurgents in the car is dead. Another is wounded and tries to crawl away when the Americans arrive. When the helicopter shot at the white car, an innocent bystander was wounded by shrapnel in the leg. The two people in the green car are dead.

09.45 In the vicinity of Abu Ghraib, a civilian corpse is found shot in the head.

Continued overleaf

13.30: Three men found feet bound, handcuffed, shot

Continued from page 9

09.45 A US paratroop patrol fails to find a reported IED near the Surra Man Ra'a restaurant in Samarra but arrests and sends off for interrogation four men, including the owner of the restaurant and "one individual attempting quickly to wash his hands and face upon sighting coalition forces". The previous day the company lost two men to a landmine.

09.55 Marines at Observation Post Horea in the ruins of Ramadi watch an Iraqi placing "a green sandbag with a pole" nearby. They believe it to be a bomb. They fire six grenades, then lose sight of him.

10.00 Ali Hussein, 70, found dead in the street with a gunshot wound to the head, west Baghdad.

10.13 US army engineers driving a Buffalo, a 27ft, heavily armoured, supposedly mine-proof truck, slow down to take the exit off a motorway and are struck by a salvo of homemade "explosively formed penetrators", designed to punch through the toughest armour: One of them punctures the Buffalo just under the left side window, piercing the metal and severing the left arm of the passenger sitting there below the elbow. Four other occupants are lacerated by shrapnel.

10.15 In Baghdad, a woman is found handcuffed, blindfolded and shot in the head. An unidentified plane – the loggers do not say, but it must be American – shoots up a civilian car in Baghdad's Dorah district, killing the car's owner and one other person and destroying the car. The logs give no details and the incident is not mentioned again.

10.15 In Mosul, the Iraqi army is struck by a multi-IED attack and a drive-by shooting from two cars. One civilian is killed and two soldiers are wounded, one of whom may lose his sight and both legs.

10.30 A car bomb blows up at an Iraqi police checkpoint in southern Baghdad, killing two Iraqi policemen, Ibrahim Sarhan Kuheid and Maad Tumma Khalaf, and injuring eleven. In the west of the city a civilian is wounded in a drive-by shooting. The firefight that began after the truck explosion an hour earlier is over. The insurgents have melted away.

11.00 US troops on patrol with Iraqi police in Baquba, north-east of Baghdad, take heavy fire. Two Iraqi police are injured. An Iraqi policeman is found murdered in north Baghdad, shot six times in the head and chest.

11.04 US armoured vehicle damaged by roadside bomb west of Baghdad.

11.10 Bassim Khalil al Kurwy, a Sunni by denomination, found dead in Muq-dadiya, Diyala province, with two gunshot wounds to the chest.

11.10 East of Falluja, a sniper fires a single shot at the members of a battalion of part-time marines, only just arrived on active service from their home towns in Michigan. One marine is seriously wounded. The unit had two men killed two days ago. The wounded man's comrades decide the sniper is in an orange car and riddle it with bullets, injuring the driver. He turns out to be an innocent civilian.

11.28 The head of Samarra city council is attacked with an RPG. Three of his bodyguards are killed.

11.30 Iraqi policeman shot dead by sniper in Baghdad. His comrades capture two men. A later entry in the log about the incident highlights one of the loggers' idiosyncratic writing style: "Iraqi Army closed the area and cordoned and searched the area and vehicle were they captured two anti-Iraqi Forces in a vehicle with a sniper rifle and a AK-47 (Klashingcof) loaded and ready to fire.... After tactical questioning they said of a house were is anti-Iraqi forces. The Iraqi Army is preparing to cordoned and search the house to captured suspect."

11.40 Insurgents open up on an Iraqi highway patrol south of Baghdad. One policeman takes a bullet in the shoulder and a bullet in the neck but survives.

11.53 A sniper, firing from a two-storey building from about 170 yards, shoots dead a marine, Joshua Booth, in palm groves in Haditha. His comrades do not locate the shooter in time to fire back. They arrest four Iraqis.

12.00 Muhallah Huriyyah, 16, found dead in the street in Kadhimiya, Baghdad, with gunshot wound to the head. Body shows signs of torture. Civilian found shot in the head in Isskan, Baghdad. Mortar attack on Baghdad's Abu Dashir market kills one

civilian and injures ten. Two Iraqi police wounded in drive-by shooting. A US special forces vehicle takes a motorway bend too fast and rolls over, toppling off the edge of a bridge and killing a gunner, Daniel Winegeart.

12.15 Iraqi policeman shot dead in Baquba, three civilians wounded. In another part of Baquba, Iraqi police open fire on a woman driver who refuses to leave her car when asked and tries to drive away. The woman is killed.

12.25 A group of insurgents opens fire on a marine patrol in Amariya, seriously injuring two of them. The marines fire back but don't know if they hit their enemy.

12.20 Brother of the governor of Nineveh province attacked in Mosul. One bodyguard wounded.

12.24 US soldier shot in the face by insurgent while helping host a "media opportunity" in Tarmiya, north of Baghdad.

12.30 Unidentified male pulled from the Tigris. The victim was shot in the head. Two insurgents on a motorbike carry out a drive-by shooting, wounding one civilian. Police pursue, firing, and hit one insurgent. The other escapes. South of Baghdad, US and Iraqi troops arrest a man suspected of killing two Shia drivers.

12.35 Sniper wounds Iraqi policeman in Mammon, Baghdad.

12.38 Three coalition soldiers – possibly British, but the loggers don't specify – injured in an RPG attack near Basra.

12.45 Unidentified corpse found handcuffed and asphyxiated in Baghdad.

12.58 Falluja: Sniper kills Iraqi soldier.

13.00 Three civilians wounded in Baghdad explosion. Male body found next to the Yafa school in Mammon, Bagh-

12.00
Muhallah Hariyah,
16, dead in Baghdad
street from
gunshot. Body
showed signs
of torture

dad. Victim approximately 35 years old, hands bound behind his back with cloth, one gunshot wound to the head, appears to have animal bite marks on his neck.

13.05 Marines arrest a man near Khalidiya, Anbar province, on suspicion of being an insurgent. They find equipment, including "a box full of IED-making cards", in a house nearby.

13.07 The same marine reserve company that lost a man to a sniper in Falluja two hours ago is attacked again. This time the sniper kills an Iraqi army soldier.

13.15 Off-duty Iraqi policeman shot dead in Baquba.

13.18 US army engineer base in Ramadi struck by RPG. One soldier wounded.

13.30 One unidentified man found shot in the head in Iskan, Baghdad. Three men found handcuffed, feet bound and shot in the head in Mahmoudiya, Baghdad.

13.30 South of Baghdad, US and Iraqi troops arrest a man suspected of killing two Shia drivers.

13.32 A US convoy in Diyala province encounters a civilian car heading towards it. The car is warned off and stops by the side of the road. As the last Humvee in the three-vehicle convoy goes past the

17.10.06 IN NUMBERS

146
Total number of deaths recorded by the US field logs
136
Total number of Iraqi deaths
10
Total of American dead
58
Number of arrests made
17
People reported kidnapped
49
Bomb, mortar or IED attacks recorded

car blows up, 200lb of explosive creating a huge blast and fireball. The loggers note, with surprise, that there were no injuries and only superficial damage to the Humvee. They make no mention of the driver of the car, presumably vapourised when he triggered the bomb.

13.40 Iraqi policeman shot and injured while driving towards Abu Ghraib. Two civilians shot dead by unknown Iraqis in Diyala province.

13.45 Marine Humvee strikes a "speed bump", style IED in Anbar province. The bomb blows off the vehicle's left front tyre and injures four marines.

14.00 'Z', an Iraqi interpreter with a US artillery battalion, is kidnapped while heading back to his base in Tikrit after six days on leave in Baghdad. In his absence a large town on his route, Balad, has been convulsed by brutal sectarian violence between Shias and Sunnis from which US troops initially stood aside. After they pass through the locked-down streets of Balad, Z and two other interpreters are stopped by masked, uniformed Iraqi police who are working with a group of insurgents. Z's two friends show their Saddam-era ID cards, which don't specify religious affiliation, but the only ID Z has is his birth certificate, which states that he is Shia. The others are let go and Z is interrogated by the leader of the insurgents. He persuades him to spare him and is released.

14.20 Hearing that a member of his family was targeted for arrest, an Iraqi hands the man over to US forces at Camp Falcon on the southern outskirts of Baghdad.

14.30 Estonian troops north of Baghdad find the corpses of three Iraqis, bound, with gunshot wounds to the head.

14.45 Two Iraqi policemen shot and injured by insurgents in Yarmuk, Baghdad.

14.50 Unidentified male corpse found in Suq al Jadida, Baghdad. Shot in the head.

14.55 A convoy of four US army Humvees on patrol north-west of Baquba. Watching them is an insurgent at one end of a wire several hundred yards long. At the other end of the wire is an explosive charge shaped into a cylinder with a concave copper disc facing the road. As the second Humvee passes the device, the triggerman closes the circuit and the explosive detonates, turning the copper almost to liquid and forcing it into a rocket shape that flies with extreme force into the side of the US vehicle. It is a similar device to the weapon that punched a hole in the Buffalo four and a half hours earlier. This time the damage is worse. Three Americans, Ryan Haupt, Norman Taylor and Nathan Frigo, are killed outright and a fourth has the femoral artery severed in his right leg. One Iraqi found walking with his bike nearby is arrested.

15.00 An IED injures an Iraqi policeman in Muthana, Baghdad. In Basra, Yaseen Ajman Yaseen is blown up by his own bomb while trying to plant it. Iraqi police report the murder of three unidentified civilians, found with multiple gunshot wounds, in central Baghdad.

15.02 Civilian tells Iraqi army of three corpses with gunshot wounds to the head in Muradiya, just outside Baghdad's southern suburbs.

15.10 Unknown Iraqis break into a house in southern Baghdad, kill three people and wound two others.

15.12 US cavalrymen in Baghdad find three half-buried corpses.

15.15 Marines in Ramadi arrest a suspected insurgent found in possession of 30 electronic timers.

15.15 An Iraqi civilian driving through central Baghdad is forced to pull over by another car. A man gets out of the second car, forces the first driver out at gunpoint, shoots him dead, gets in his car and drives away. Who the men are, why one kills and one is killed, is a mystery.

15.20 A mortar shell, assumed to have been fired by Iraqis, lands near a mosque in Mahmoudiya, killing one civilian and injuring another.

15.27 Marines in Khalidiya, in Anbar province, search a house and find multiple cordless phone base stations and a Kalashnikov with four loaded magazines. They arrest the house's owner.

15.30 Two unidentified male corpses found in Taji, handcuffed, blindfolded and shot in the head. Two men murdered with gunshot wounds to the head in Haifa Street, central Baghdad.

15.40 Presumed insurgent mortar shell

17.10.06: A DAY IN PICTURES



BAQUBA SUSPECTS HELD AT AN ARMY BASE
There were eight police, civilian and US forces deaths logged this day. AP



NAJAF MOURNERS IN THE HOLY CITY
136 Iraqi deaths are recorded in the day's US army logs. AFP



PATROL BASE 'STEELERS' MARINES FIGHT BACK
US 2nd Marines return fire after an insurgent attack. AP



BAGHDAD THE RELATIVES WEEP
Families of the previous day's victims gathered outside the city mortuary. AFP



BAGHDAD AFTERMATH OF A MORTAR ATTACK
Log records one civilian death and nine wounded in midday attack on a market. AFP



BAQUBA ELDERLY MAN WOUNDED
Six civilian wounded, and three kidnapped, are logged in the city. AFP



BAGHDAD RAMADAN CAR BOMB
The first of the capital's car bombs detonated at 9.30am. AFP



THE GREEN ZONE SADDAM ON TRIAL
Iraq's ousted leader addressed the court. Outside, the violence continued. AFP

lands close to a mosque in Sakran, south of Baghdad, killing one civilian and wounding another.

15.45 A group of Iraqis in Iraqi army uniforms, driving six cars, kidnaps 10 people from a house in Baghdad's Wadha area. South of Baquba, presumed insurgents open fire on a car, killing a civilian.

15.57 Two civilians wounded in Iraqi-on-Iraqi shooting incident in Mosul.

16.00 Iraqi policeman shot and wounded in Rashid, Baghdad.

16.01 Presumed insurgent shell lands in street in Samarra, killing a civilian and wounding four others.

16.10 In full view of a 23rd Infantry command post in central-west Baghdad, four white Toyota Land Cruisers bear down on a civilian and one of the men inside shoots him. Two of the cars are police cars. They take the injured man away.

16.15 The body of Fraidun Abdul Karim Saad is found shot in the head in a small town north of Baghdad.

16.20 Man found shot in the head in west-central Baghdad. IED goes off north-west of Baquba, killing a civilian and injuring three.

16.23 South of Falluja, a US team checking for roadside bombs is approached from behind by a car described as "a baby-blue Caprice". The car stops, a man gets out, fires an RPG, gets back inside and drives away.

16.24 The 23rd Infantry unit that witnessed the shooting and abduction by Iraqi police, or men pretending to be police, at 16.10 find the victim's brother. He explains that his brother was kidnapped, then tried to escape and get help from the Americans, before he was shot and abducted again. He leads the American soldiers to a building where, he says, his brother is to be executed.

16.25 Body with a gunshot wound to the head found inside a black car just north of the airport road in west Baghdad.

16.30 Dead man found handcuffed, blindfolded and shot in the head on the eastern edge of Baghdad.

16.37 Outside Balad, an American blimp with sophisticated radar originally designed to detect cruise missiles; two Apache helicopter gunships; and a \$4m Predator drone are employed to arrest three men seen digging with a pickaxe by the side of the road. Near Ramadi, a marine patrol find a suspected car bomb and, while waiting for the disposal team, are approached by a ramshackle convoy of a Kia Bongo truck and a white car towing a blue van. The marines prepare to search the truck. An Iraqi steps out of one of the vehicles and raises his arm to throw a grenade. Before he can throw it, it explodes, blowing his right arm off. The marines open fire and kill one of the Iraqis, possibly the one who tried to throw the grenade. Five others are arrested.

16.40 The corpses of five Iraqi killed execution-style in north-west Baghdad are shown to US troops by Iraqi police, who say they "collected" them.

16.42 Another firefight in central Ramadi sees the marines launch 89 grenades at four insurgents with Kalashnikovs in a building 250 yards away. They are sure they killed one of them.

16.44 Iraqi police major wounded by bomb in east-central Baghdad. In west Falluja, the bad day for the normally part-time marines of the 24th Regiment continues. A child throws a grenade at a patrol, seriously injuring one marine.

16.49 Insurgents open fire on an observation post run by a US tank unit in south-eastern Ramadi. After the Americans return fire, they see a group of insurgents with Kalashnikovs and an RPG launcher run out of the building they were firing from and jump into a black four-wheel drive, from where they carry on shooting. One of the unit's M1 tanks, waiting nearby, heads for the scene and shoots its machine gun at the car. The car escapes, then reappears a few blocks away, and the tank opens fire again but misses. The tank crew switch to a bigger machine gun, but it jams. They radio for permission to use their main gun, a powerful weapon designed to take out heavily armoured Soviet tanks at long range, in the dense city streets of Ramadi. Permission is granted and they fire one shot. The car is destroyed and all four of its occupants killed.

16.50 A bomb kills an Iraqi soldier and wounds two near a mosque in central Baghdad. In the north-west of the city a man is found with two Kalashnikovs and

a machine gun and arrested.

17.00 US troops at the Syrian border arrest an Iraqi with a suspicious passport and Baathist propaganda in his car. Iraqi police colonel shot and wounded in southern Baghdad. Fighting between Iraqi security forces and a local tribe, the Garamsha, in the south. Two Iraqi police killed, two wounded, one missing, believed kidnapped. Unidentified male body found shot in the head in Taji.

17.05 US Cavalry patrol in Salman Pak struck by a bullet. A soldier's foot grazed.

17.10 The 23rd Infantry unit has searched the building where the Iraqi thought his brother had been taken for execution. They found Iraqi police uniforms. They set out to see if the Land Cruisers are in the yards of any local police stations. In Haqlaniya, a village by the Euphrates in north-west Iraq, a grenade and a single bullet fly out of the window of a truck as it passes a marine foot patrol, injuring one American. The attackers escape unscathed. An Iraqi police officer is killed in an exchange of fire with suspected insurgents in Salman Pak.

17.20 Unidentified male found with hands and feet bound, shot in the head.

17.33 A US checkpoint in Ramadi comes under shellfire. Six Americans are wounded, one seriously, and an interpreter is hurt.

17.34 The 23rd Infantry unit is still seeking closure on the shooting and kidnapping they witnessed, which they clearly suspect is the work of a Shia death squad working within the police. The last entries in the log of the incident report that they are going to Yamuk hospital "to check on wounded", but it is not clear if

16.42
Marines in Ramadi
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they know the missing man is there, or if they are trying to find him.

17.48 A marine engineer convoy is hit by an IED, slightly wounding one marine.

17.55 Convoy run by Crescent, a private security company, attacked outside Basra. Two RPGs hit the lead vehicle; one flies through one side and out the other without going off, the other hits the back of the vehicle, causing severe damage and lacerating one passenger with shrapnel. The convoy is harried with small arms fire for the next two miles before reaching safety.

18.00 Five unidentified male corpses found in north-east Baghdad. Iraqi army convoy struck by a roadside bomb in west-central Baghdad. One soldier killed, two wounded.

18.00 Outside Falluja, an Iraqi army checkpoint takes a taxi with gunfire when it doesn't slow down or stop, wounding one passenger. Further west, on a lonely desert road, a US patrol searches the boot of an Opel, finds a pressure switch and arrests the driver and two passengers.

18.05 A salvo of rockets hits a US base on the eastern edge of Baghdad. Two Iraqi civilians and one American are injured.

18.10 A bomb injures an Iraqi policeman in southern Baghdad.

18.20 In Haqlaniya, in western Anbar, marines arrest six people after testing kits show traces of explosives on them.

18.30 Iraqi civilian wounded by bomb near Balad.

18.47 US troops raid a house in Mosul and arrest two men, including one with an ID that matches a name on the "high value target" list.

19.00 Unidentified male corpse found on the street in north-east Baghdad. Bomb injures an Iraqi policeman in Balad.

19.20 A convoy of Humvees near Anah, in north-west Iraq, is moving slowly, urging recruits to come forward for the Iraqi police, when the last vehicle is struck by an RPG. An Iraqi policeman is badly injured and the Humvee is destroyed.

19.30 Police stop a vehicle in east-central Baghdad and arrest five Iraqis. The detainees, say the police, were carrying two switchblades with bloodstains and a pistol with a silencer and were "following a civilian". Civilian kidnapped and his car stolen in Baquba.

20.00 Unidentified civilian corpse found blindfolded, handcuffed and shot in the head in Huriya, west Baghdad.

20.10 Four unidentified male bodies and the body of one man with a Syrian passport, Mohamed Abdel Ghader Kheri, found in Sadr City, Baghdad, with their hands and feet bound, shot in the head.

20.11 Iraqi policeman murdered in his home in Samarra.

20.15 Iraqi policeman Tahar Saddun shot dead in west-central Baghdad. Three bombs go off together in south-west Baghdad, damaging four houses and injuring 13 people.

20.16 A US cavalryman on a dismounted patrol south of Baghdad suffers shrapnel wounds and burns to the face when he steps on an anti-personnel mine.

20.45 Iraqi policeman shot and wounded by presumed insurgent, Falluja.

20.55 US troops see Iraqis digging by the side of a road and hiding when the convoy approaches. They arrest all three.

21.00 Thaher Sadoon Kalil, a 59-year-old intelligence officer with the Iraqi national police, found dead, shot once in the temple, in west-central Baghdad.

21.03 US troops in Ramadi see an Iraqi getting through the barrier and wire at the easternmost checkpoint of their post. They shoot him dead.

21.27 Mortar shell wounds an American in Baquba.

21.30 Ahmed Dawood Madhloom found shot in the head in Sadr City, Baghdad.

21.50 US infantrymen searching a house in Najm al Abd Allah, south-west of Baghdad, inspect the hard drive of an Iraqi civilian's computer and find a Microsoft Word file called "Infantry". They arrest the civilian. Examination of the hard drive reveals a number of computer games, including *Medal of Honor*, in which the player is a heroic US soldier in the second world war, and *Socom US Navy Seals*, in which the player is a heroic American soldier tasked with wiping out terrorists. The suspect is released.

22.00 Lt Ammar Sattar of the Iraqi security forces found murdered with multiple gunshot wounds in Hilla. While being examined by a doctor, a bruised Iraqi prisoner at a US "detainee internment facility" in Baquba says one of his previous captors, an Iraqi police unit, kicked him in the face, arm and leg. "All paperwork," record the loggers, "has been sent up through the necessary channels."

22.50 Marine convoy hit by IED near Falluja. Four marines wounded, one Humvee badly damaged.

23.20 An Iraqi security forces unit comes under fire from the Sunni Saydiya mosque, across the Tigris from Baghdad university. Two Iraqi police are injured and a reinforced unit of police storms the mosque. Iraqis in surrounding houses fire on the police. After a gunfight lasting an hour, the police are able to enter the mosque, where they find a homemade bomb, explosives and a Kalashnikov. They arrest two people. "Located inside one of the adjacent homes," runs the log entry, "were pictures of terrorists that had just beheaded their victims."

23.30 Marine convoy strikes a homemade mine in Haditha, seriously injuring two men, although the log records, confusingly, "no coalition force casualties".

23.45 Iraqi convoy hit by IED near Kirkuk. Three Iraqi soldiers are killed and three police wounded.

So ends another day in Iraq, 2006; a day when, in the homeland on the far side of the world, Vice-President Dick Cheney went on Rush Limbaugh's radio show. "If you look at the general overall situation," said Cheney, asked about Iraq, "they're doing remarkably well."

