

Coup Plot Foiled; US Fires on Fallujah Shoe-Throwers

18 Dead, Dozens Wounded in Baghdad Bombings

By [Prof. Juan Cole](#)

Global Research, December 19, 2008

Information Clearinghouse 19 December
2008

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [IRAQ REPORT](#)

The news from Iraq on Wednesday shows that the Iraqi government's hold on power is fragile, and that it faces shadowy coup *plotters from within and a continued guerrilla insurgency from without*. Parliament is so divided that it had to go home after vehement wrangling in which the shoe-throwing journalist, Muntazar al-Zaidi, figured prominently. Al-Zaidi continued to be lionized by many Iraqis, including in Fallujah, where a student rally in his defense drew the fire of the US military. The British prime minister, Gordon Brown, showed up unexpectedly in Baghdad, to announce that British troops would be out of the country by June. Turkey bombed positions of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) in northern Iraq for a second straight day.

[The NYT reports that an elite counter-terrorism unit that reports directly to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki](#) has arrested 38 officials in the Interior Ministry (similar to US Homeland Security). They are accused of belonging to the neo-Baath "al-`Awdah" party and of plotting a coup against the Iraqi government.

This cover story makes no sense, and it seems more likely that al-Maliki is continuing to clean house and is purging Interior of people placed there by previous governments or by the US CIA and Department of Defense. The Interior Ministry was set up by Naqib al-Falah, an ex-Baathist Sunni whose father had been a Baathist general who defected in the 1970s. Ayad Allawi was the CIA's point man in organizing the defecting officers in London. Naqib Falah was brought onto the cabinet by CIA Allawi when the latter was appointed interim prime minister by the US in 2004. Falah seeded Interior with fellow Sunni ex-Baathists and set up a special police commando unit that initially targeted Shiites. Likewise, Iraqi Intelligence [appears to have been a mainly CIA operation in 2003-2006](#).

When the Shiite United Iraqi Alliance won the 2005 elections, PM Ibrahim Jaafari gave interior to Bayan Jabr, a Turkmen member of the pro-Iran Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq. Jabr reconfigured the special police commandos as a hard line Shiite unit. But neither Jaafari nor al-Maliki has had complete control of the bureaucracy, and many of Falah's ex-Baathists, whether Sunni or Shiite, managed to hold on to their jobs. Until now. Anyway, that is my guess.

Otherwise, it is not plausible at this late date that 28 people in Interior could make a neo-Baath coup.

Three [car bombs killed 18 persons and just one of them wounded 52](#) in Baghdad on Wednesday. The largest of the bombs targeted a police station in Nahdha shopping district in northeastern Baghdad. [Two bombings also killed 4 persons in the northern city of Mosul](#) on Wednesday.

[British PM Gordon Brown showed up in Baghdad](#) to announce the withdrawal of British troops from Iraq by June. [Brown has been getting severe pressure from his conservative and Liberal-Democratic opposition](#) over the need to set a timetable.

[Iraqi parliamentarians got into a shouting match on Wednesday over Muntazar al-Zaidi](#), with MPs of the Sadr Movement demanding that the session, originally called to discuss the withdrawal of US troops from Iraqi cities by June 30, instead be devoted to al-Zaidi and allegations that he was beaten and injured in custody. The wrangling got so bad that Speaker of the House Mahmoud Mashhadani threw up his hands and left, declaring that he intended to resign his post because presiding over parliament was an impossible task.

[McClatchy reports that university students in the Sunni Arab city of Fallujah west of Baghdad held a demonstration on Wednesday](#) in which they waved their shoes and threw stones at US troops. McClatchy writes:

‘ Students raised their shoes and threw rocks at American soldiers, who reportedly opened fire above the crowd. Protesters said that indirect fire wounded one student, Zaid Salih. U.S. forces haven’t confirmed the account. “We demonstrated to express our support for Muntathar al Zaidi, but we were surprised with the entrance of the U.S. military,” said Ahmed Ismail, one of the protesters. “Unconsciously, we raised our shoes expressing our support for al Zaidi, but they attacked us.” ‘

[1500 demonstrators also came out for al-Zaidi on Wednesday in the Sunni Arab enclave of Adhamiya](#), on the east bank of the Tigris. Al-Zaidi, a Shiite, had once been kidnapped in that district, before ultimately being released.

McClatchy says that Muntazar al-Zaidi’s brother reports that the journalist did not appear in court on Wednesday, but rather was interviewed in his holding cell out at the airport by the judge. Despite Iraqi government denials, this procedure lends credibility to the allegations that al-Zaidi suffered a broken wrist and broken ribs when he was arrested and so would have found it painful to attend court- moreover, his condition would have drawn press comment.

[Al-Hayat reports in Arabic that](#) the harsher law under which al-Zaidi might be sentenced to as much as 7 years is para. 3, article 223, issued by the Iraqi Baath Party in 1969. So those arguing that the book should be thrown at al-Zaidi are essentially delivering him into the hands of Baathist law.

[McClatchy reports a general mood in Iraq in the wake of the shoe-throwing](#), of “we’re mad as hell and we’re not going to take it anymore. The mood was manifested when drivers refused to let Iraqi soldiers close the road in front of the green zone on Wednesday, and ignored their warning shots.

There were pro-Muntazar demonstrations on Wednesday in Beirut, where students beat

effigies of Bush with shoes, and in Lahore, Pakistan, where journalists came out in support of their colleague.

[Two parliamentarians representing Mosul](#) called on PM Nuri al-Maliki to remove the Kurdish paramilitary from the city in the run-up to the provincial elections on Jan. 31. They fear that the Peshmerga will interfere in the elections. Kurdish leaders deny the charge.

The original source of this article is Information Clearinghouse
Copyright © [Prof. Juan Cole](#), Information Clearinghouse, 2008

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Prof. Juan Cole](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca