

Operation Swarm Of Lies

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The stated mission of Operation Swarmer, launched late last week in an area just northeast of Samarra, in Iraq, was to “break up a center of insurgent resistance” and to disrupt “terrorist activity,” according to the US military.

Comprised of over 1,500 US and Iraqi soldiers, 50 US attack and transport helicopters airlifted the bold force into a flat area of farmland filled not with fighters belonging to the “center of insurgent resistance,” but with impoverished farmers, cows, goats and women baking bread. The first drop of soldiers onto the ground from this air-operation doubled the meager population of 1,500 souls living in the 50 square-mile area.

US troops acted bravely, snatching up 48 “suspected insurgents,” then promptly releasing 17 of them. They were precise in their operations, and did not detain a single cow or goat.

What did the military say about why no resistance was met?

“We believe we achieved tactical surprise,” said Lt. Col. Edward Loomis, the spokesman for the 101st Airborne Division.

Fallaciously hailed as the largest air assault in Iraq since the Anglo-American invasion three years ago, Lt. Col. Loomis said that two days into the operation his forces “continue to move” through the area, and “tactical interviews began immediately.” According to [Time magazine](#) reporters:

“Four Black Hawk helicopters landed in a wheat field and dropped off a television crew, three photographers, three print reporters and three Iraqi government officials right into the middle of Operation Swarmer. Iraqi soldiers in newly painted humvees, green and red Iraqi flags stenciled on the tailgates, had just finished searching the farm populated by a half-dozen skinny cows and a woman kneading freshly risen dough and slapping it to the walls of a mud oven. But contrary to what many television networks erroneously reported, the operation was by no means the largest use of airpower since the start of the war. (“Air Assault” is a military term that refers specifically to transporting troops into an area.) In fact, there were no air-strikes and no leading insurgents were nabbed in an operation that some skeptical military analysts described as little more than a photo op. What’s more, there were no shots fired at all and the units had met no resistance, said the US and Iraqi commanders.”

Of course, the US military claimed that two local leaders of the group led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi were to have been in the area, but alas, they were not to be caught up in Operation Swarmer or any of the “tactical interviews.”

Meanwhile on Sunday, fresh from a relaxing weekend at Camp David, Mr. Bush said of Iraq, "I'm encouraged by the progress," while talking to reporters on the South Lawn of the White House.

Bush, his comments sticking to the talking points of his administration which surround this three year anniversary of the launching of Operation Iraqi Freedom, nearly mirrored those made recently by General Peter Pace. Pace, as you recall, when asked on "Meet the Press" about Iraq, said things were "going very, very well from everything you look at."

Operation Swarm of Lies is part of yet another Cheney administration media blitz to put a happy face on this horrendously failed misadventure in Iraq. All too aware of the plummeting US public support for the war effort, and with approval ratings for the so-called president at an all time low, Bush had been sent out on the campaign trail to apply fresh gloss to the tattered sheen of the US occupation of Iraq. Sticking with their talking points of having Iraqi forces take over security responsibilities, the primary purpose of Operation Swarm of Lies was obviously to send the message to Americans that the US military are allowing Iraqis to "take the fight to the enemy."

But this operation of mass distraction has served other purposes as well.

Operation Swarm of Lies served well in diverting media attention in the US from US/UK covert operations in Iran last Friday.

Even the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation [reported](#) that Iran's national police chief, Ismail Ahmadi Moghaddamm, accused US and British agents of playing a role in the deaths of 21 people in southeastern Iran. Moghaddamm accused the intelligence services of both the US and UK of encouraging attacks by Iranian rebel groups against civilians.

Operation Swarm of Lies also effectively distracted media attention from the arrest of an American "security contractor" in Tikrit last week. According to the Joint Coordination Center between the US and Iraqi military in Tikrit, "the man is described as a security contractor working for a private company," and he "possessed explosives which were found in his car" when he was [arrested last Tuesday](#).

This incident was also reported on al-Sharqiyah Television on March 14th , where they added that the man was arrested during an imposed curfew, and "he had explosives in his car, noting that contacts are being held between officials in Salah al-Din Governorate and US Army officials regarding the incident."

Meanwhile back in the Motherland, "Vice" President Cheney said this past weekend that Iraq is not in a civil war, but that terrorists there were involved in desperate tactics to stop Iraq's move towards democracy.

"What we've seen is a serious effort by them to foment a civil war," Cheney said during an interview on the CBS program "Face the Nation" recently, "But I don't think they've been successful."

He's right - the Iraqi people have thus far managed, miraculously, to thwart the ongoing attempts by the occupiers to "foment civil war."

Because the recent incident in Tikrit is but one example of many which have shown who the

real terrorists are in Iraq. Even just last September, two undercover British SAS soldiers were detained by Iraqi police in Basra. The Brits were dressed as Iraqis, traveling in an unmarked civilian car, and “Iraqi security officials ... accused the two Britons they detained of shooting at Iraqi forces or trying to plant explosives. Photographs of the two men in custody showed them in civilian clothes.”

According the same article by the Washington Post, the British military promptly razed the Iraqi jail in order to free their two soldiers. In response, Mohammed Walli, the governor of the province, told news agencies that the British assault was “barbaric, savage and irresponsible.”

Barbaric, savage and irresponsible are words that can also be used to describe the true nature of Operation Swarm of Lies.

Just this past Sunday, the Director of the Monitoring Net of Human Rights in Iraq (MHRI), Muhamad al-Deraji, issued an appeal to the UN mission in Baghdad regarding violations committed by the US military operation near Samarra.

“We have received information from citizens and human rights activists in Samarra stating that the region, under American and Iraqi military operation ... is witnessing dangerous human rights violations, which is confirmed by the following:

- 1 - The Red Crescent aiding missions are not allowed to enter the region.
- 2 - [Independent] Press and media are, as well, forbidden from entering the region.
- 3 - Women and children are not allowed to leave the region of military operations.
- 4 - Receipt of news indicates presence of violations and assault for citizens aiming to terrorize them and forces them to emigrate from this region, through arresting the men and forcing women and their horrified children to escape later, on and leave the region aiming to build a military base there.”

Most importantly, however, is the human tragedy which Operation Swarm of Lies has both generated as well as diverted attention from.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, via the Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) reported on Sunday, [“Hundreds of families displaced](#) due to major offensive.”

The report says “hundreds of families have fled the city of Samarra” as the result of Operation Swarmer. Barakat Muhammad, a resident and father of five who lives in Samarra told IRIN, “When they started to hit our city I didn’t take anything. I just took my family and ran like hell. We don’t have anything to eat or wear.”

Despite claims by the US military that no shots were fired, obviously bombs were dropped on civilians.

The IRIN report adds that “local doctors say that at least 35 civilians, including women and children, have been treated at the local hospital with injuries caused by the air strikes. In addition, 18 bodies had been taken to the hospital since 17 March.”

Yet there have been ongoing air strikes north/northeast of Baghdad since at least last Wednesday.

According to the aforementioned Iraqi NGO MHRI, as well as AP reporters, “eleven people – most of them women and children – have been killed after US forces bombed a house during a raid north of Baghdad.” The [US military acknowledged](#) the raid which occurred near Balad, about 50 miles north of Baghdad, but said only four people were killed – a man, two women and a child.

Relatives, however, said 11 bodies wrapped in blankets were driven in the back of three pickup trucks to the Tikrit General Hospital, about 40 miles north of where the air strike occurred.

As usual, reality contradicted the claims by the US military of only four dead, when AP photographs showed the bodies of two men, five children and four other covered figures arriving at the hospital accompanied by grief-stricken relatives.

Even a police captain from nearby Samarra, Laith Mohammed, said that American warplanes and armor were used in the strike which flattened the house, killing all 11 people inside.

An AP reporter at the scene of the bombing in the rural area of Isahaqi said “the roof of the house collapsed, three cars were destroyed and two cows killed.”

Riyadh Majid, the nephew of the head of the family who was killed, told the AP that US forces landed in helicopters and raided the home early last Wednesday. Ahmed Khalaf, the brother of the deceased head of the household, said nine of the victims were family members who lived at the house and two were visitors.

“The killed family was not part of the resistance, they were women and children,” said Khalaf, “The Americans have promised us a better life, but we get only death.”

As per their now standard operating procedure, the US military claimed the strike targeted an individual “suspected” of supporting al-Qaida. And as usual, the military claimed they were under attack from the house.

“Troops were engaged by enemy fire as they approached the building,” according to Tech. Sgt. Stacy Simon, “Coalition forces returned fire utilizing both air and ground assets.”

And the al-Qaida suspects killed by this particular air strike were of the [younger variety](#) this time around, again as usual for the US military in Iraq.

But of course, all of this was effectively overshadowed by Operation Swarm of Lies.

To view more photos of the results of the US air-strike on the home in Balad, click [here](#)

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