



WORLD

Baghdad Mayor Decries Daily Misery

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Baghdad's mayor decried the capital's crumbling infrastructure and its inability to supply enough clean water to residents, threatening Thursday to resign if the government won't provide more money.

The statement from Mayor Alaa Mahmoud al-Timimi was an indication of the daily misery that Baghdad's 6.45 million people still endure more than two years after the U.S.-led invasion. They are wracked not only by unrelenting bombings and kidnappings, but by serious shortages in water, electricity and fuel.

"It's useless for any official to stay in office without the means to accomplish his job," al-Timimi told reporters.

Al-Timimi is seeking \$1.5 billion for Baghdad in 2005 but so far has received only \$85 million, said his spokesman, Ameer Ali Hasson.

Efforts to expand Baghdad's water projects were set back earlier this month when insurgents sabotaged a pipeline near Baghdad. Now, some complain the water they do get smells bad, and Hasson acknowledged in some areas, the water gets mixed with sewage.

"The problem is escalating," said al-Timimi, a Shiite who took office in May 2004.

In other developments:

☒ Three militant groups on Thursday vowed to target former Cabinet member Ayham al-Samarie, a Sunni Arab politician who has formed a group to bring Iraqi militants into the political process, according to a statement on an Islamic Web site. "We announce that it's allowed to spill the blood of Ayham al-Samarie. We have been too patient with his lies," the statement said that claimed to be issued by the Ansar al-Sunnah Army, the Islamic Army in Iraq and the Army of Mujahedeen. Its authenticity could not be verified.

☒ In western Anbar province, U.S.-led forces also have detained more than a dozen suspected militants in a counterinsurgency sweep aimed at disrupting the flow of foreign militants into Iraq, the military said.

☒ Knight Ridder identified an Iraqi journalist who was shot and killed in the capital last week when his car approached an U.S.-Iraqi military patrol as one of its special correspondents. Yasser Salihee, 30, was killed while driving alone in Baghdad on June 24, his day off. A single bullet pierced his windshield and struck him in the head. It appeared that a U.S. sniper shot him, but Iraqi soldiers in the area at the time also may have been shooting, the California-based newspaper company said. The U.S. Army was investigating the incident. Two other journalists were killed in similar incidents a few days later.

☒ Polish and Iraqi forces in Iraq detained a man suspected of attacking a Polish patrol the day before and injuring two soldiers, the military said Thursday. The man was suspected of throwing a grenade at a Polish-Iraqi military patrol that was driving through the central Iraqi city of Diwanayah, the Polish military said in a statement.

☒ The upcoming Saddam Hussein trial could mean big problems for the U.S., warns a former senior White House and congressional aide. **"The trial may allow the former Iraqi dictator to publicize some obscure but extremely sordid aspects of the U.S. relationship with him and make a very public defense against the validity of the constantly changing reasons for the current Iraq War," Robert Weiner, former spokesman for the House Government Operations Committee, asserted in a column featured in today's *Boston Globe*.**

The pipeline has been repaired and water levels are expected to return to normal in the coming days, the mayor told reporters. But that won't help with shortages that existed before the sabotage, he said.

"I am part of the government and aware of the problems the country is facing," al-Timimi said. "But I need to have technical support from the concerned parties at the government. The people are blaming me and the Baghdad municipality."

According to City Hall, Baghdad produces about 544 million gallons of water per day, some 370 million gallons short of its required amount. Some 55 percent of the water is lost through leakage in the pipes.

Iraqis also complain of shortages of power and fuel.

Electrical shortfalls were common during the Saddam Hussein era and attributed to a poor distribution network, but the situation has worsened due to sabotage and lack of maintenance.

Before the U.S.-led invasion, Baghdad residents had about 20 hours of electricity a day. Today, they get about 10, usually broken into two-hour chunks.

In addition, Iraq is not able to refine enough oil, so must import gasoline. Convoys carrying fuel are often attacked by insurgents and the ensuing shortage has led to a black market in Baghdad.

Meanwhile Thursday, the U.S. military claimed some success over Baghdad's other major problem — car bombs and suicide attackers. A spokesman said a recent security operation had worked.

"We had a measurable success," said U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Don Alston, a spokesman for coalition forces in Iraq. He did not offer specifics.

More than 1,000 members of the Iraqi security services had died since the transfer of sovereignty one year ago, the U.S. military said without giving an exact figure.

At least 1,743 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,341 died as a result of hostile action. Of those, 75 were killed in June, one of the deadlier months.

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