

THE BATTALION

Families and friends of POWs try to remain optimistic

By Chris Roberts
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

EL PASO, Texas (AP) — Families of American soldiers missing in Iraq hoped for news of miraculous rescues as U.S. forces removed Saddam Hussein's regime from its "seat of power" in Baghdad on Wednesday.

For some, no news was good news. For others, the lack of news extended the already agonizing wait.

For Anecita Hudson, a good dose of motherly intuition meant no doubts about her son's life. Hudson, mother of Army Spc. Joseph Hudson, 23, of Alamogordo, N.M., said she would know if something had happened to her son, who was captured in Iraq on March 23.

"They are just saying the Americans are taking over the Baghdad, but what I want to hear, since they are in Baghdad, I want them to bring the POWs home," Hudson said Wednesday. "I have no doubts my son is out there and he is very alive and he is awaiting to be rescued. If something happens to my son, I will feel it."

Casper, Wyo., resident Angela Reiss's son Marine Sgt. Brendon Reiss, 23, is listed as

missing. She is concerned that her son may be among bodies yet to be identified, but she takes some comfort from the rescue of Army Pfc. Jessica Lynch, who had been listed as missing but was plucked from an Iraqi hospital on April 1.

"It doesn't sound possible that Brendon is alive but there's always that hope that he could be a POW," Reiss said. "They didn't know at that point who the POWs were and who weren't."

Wednesday was a rough day for the family of Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Ronald D. Young Jr., 26, of Lithia Springs, Ga., a Fort Hood helicopter pilot who was captured. News of bloodstained uniforms — possibly those of U.S. POWs — found in a Baghdad prison was worrisome.

"It was a down day for me," said father Ron Young, a Vietnam veteran, who called his older son Mark to lift his spirits.

"I feel like the next big thing on the list has to be the POWS," he said. "I don't think the

regime is completely down ... but I think it's just a matter of time for the POWs to get back."

Brenda Wilson, the mother of missing Marine Pfc. Tamario Burkett, 21, is hopeful that the latest developments will mean an end to the fighting and her heart-wrenching wait.

"I'm just hoping that there's an end to the war and that they'll be able to tell me something. Anything is better than nothing right now," she said from her Buffalo, N.Y., home. "They say no news is good news, but right now for me, that's not the case."

"How can you have hope when you have nothing? No information, period."

Dave Williams, father of Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 David S. Williams, 30, of Orlando, Fla., who was captured along with Young, said he isn't listening to television reports.

"I've been positive the whole way, but you can't get caught up in the story until the confirma-

tion that they've located the POWs and the POWs are safe," Williams said.

"I'm sure that (the Army) is doing everything in their power to try to find the POWs just like they did Jessica," he said.

Carolyn Hutchings watches television in the hopes that she might catch a glimpse of her son, Marine Pvt. Nolen Ryan Hutchings, 19, of Boiling Springs, S.C., who is listed as missing.

"It's on 24-7," said Hutchings, who could not bring herself to watch a movie even at the urging of a family member. "I can't get away from the TV."

The family of a 22-year-old Marine from Hutchings' battalion tries to stay busy.

"It's difficult," said Paul Patchem, stepfather of Cpl. Kemaphoom A. Chanawongse, from Waterford, Conn. "We try to deal with the media and try to get into a routine — get back to normal. We've incorporated more prayer into our routine."

In Brownsville, Levi Anguiano, cousin of missing Army Sgt. Edward John Anguiano, said the family was hopeful that he would be found or released now that the government appears to be in collapse. "We hope he's OK."

"I have no doubts my son is out there and he is very alive and he is awaiting to be rescued."

— Anecita Hudson
Mother of soldier missing since March 23

NEWS IN BRIEF

Charges dismissed against Marine accused of sabotage

CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C. (AP) — Charges against one of two Marines accused of sabotaging parachutes have been dismissed, military officials said Wednesday.

Lance Cpl. Julian Ramirez, 25, was cleared of all charges, including attempted murder, conspiracy and destruction of government property, Camp Lejeune officials said in a news release.

Recommendations involving charges against the other Marine, Lance Cpl. Antoine Boykins, 21, were still being reviewed, the news release said. Three Marines were injured Sept. 21 when their parachutes failed to open after a jump from 1,250 feet; each landed with a reserve chute. Investigators said 13 of the 22 parachutes had been tampered with.

At a hearing last month, a military prosecutor said the two Marines secretly cut suspension lines to avenge the ill will of their platoon commander.

But one of Ramirez's attorneys told the judge that no forensic evidence presented in the military hearing — the equivalent of a civilian grand jury — tied his client to the crime.

Local Iraqis celebrate forces in Baghdad; others question intentions

By Anita Chang
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DALLAS — As coalition forces swept into Iraq's capital Wednesday, some Iraqis living in Texas cheered like the jubilant crowds around the town square, but others agonized over civilian casualties and said U.S. troops should leave quickly.

Chanting "U.S.A., U.S.A., U.S.A.," a group of Kurds in North Dallas clasped hands and danced in a circle Wednesday evening as they celebrated what they believe is Saddam Hussein's fall from power in Iraq.

"Everyone wants to cheer that Saddam's out," said 8-year-old Warvin Abdullah, one of about 150 Kurds who gathered outside the office of Kurdish Human Rights Watch, Inc. of Dallas.

Earlier in the day, Khalil Jaloub struggled for the words to describe his feelings. "When I heard the news today and saw the pictures, and seeing the people how happy they are, the feeling I have is hard to describe. It's elated, I guess," said Jaloub, a 37-year-old minister of missions at a Baptist church in Plano. He left Iraq to attend school in England, and then immigrated to the United States in 1987.

"The Iraqi people inside Iraq and outside Iraq have been waiting for the end of the regime since 1968," he said.

Saddam's Baath Party overtook the Iraqi government in a military coup in 1968, and Saddam took charge of Iraq's internal security forces.

Many Kurds, an ethnic minority long oppressed by Iraq's dictator Saddam Hussein, were especially exultant that Baghdad appeared to be falling into

coalition hands.

"It's my birthday. Saddam is gone, so it's my birthday today," said Zuhair Missouri, a Kurd living in Dallas.

"As long as I remember, I was less than five years old, a kid, since then I remember Saddam's picture all over, security police all over, the only time we could feel or breathe liberation was in 1991 with the uprising in the north," added Zewar Almissouri, 28, a restaurant manager who came to the United States about six years ago.

The postwar uprising in 1991 was crushed by Saddam's forces. But later — under the protection of U.S.-led air patrols — the Kurds began to rebound.

"I could say we could feel like it's a national celebration or birthday to each Iraqi because we felt bad for Iraqis back home, but today was a really great day," Almissouri said.

Missouri and Almissouri are both affiliated with the Kurdish Human Rights Watch in Dallas, where Kurds young and old waved American and Kurdish flags and proclaimed their gratitude to President Bush and U.S. and British troops.

But not all Iraqis were happy about the troops' advancements.

Hadi Jawad, vice president and board member of the Dallas Peace Center, said he was horrified when he saw the images of American forces pulling down the statue of Saddam, not because he supports the Iraqi leader, but because he objects to the mounting civilian casualties.

"There's nobody in the world who protects that murderous dictator. The question is the means the U.S. and British have gone to taken to the removal of that regime," he said.

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