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Monday, May 3, 2004

Al-Sadr forces attack U.S. convoy in Iraq

By Scheherezade Faramarzi THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NAJAF, Iraq - Shiite militiamen attacked a U.S. convoy in southern Iraq, killing two soldiers and setting vehicles on fire, even as mediators were trying Sunday to find a resolution to the U.S. standoff with the militia's leader. Two other American soldiers were killed in Baghdad.

This latest convoy attack came Saturday night outside the city of Amarah, 180 miles south of the capital, when gunmen loyal to radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr opened fire with small arms and rocket-propelled grenades, a U.S. military official said.

A number of Humvees and trucks were seen burning on the road

hours later, witnesses said.

British forces battled al-Sadr's al-Mahdi Army militia for 12 hours in Amarah in fighting that left five Iraqis dead and eight British soldiers wounded.

The clash began when gunmen attacked a British patrol, wounding one soldier. Five more soldiers were wounded as a team rescued the first man, said British Royal Air Force Squadron Leader

Fighting revived in the evening when insurgents fired mortar shells and rocket-propelled grenades at the British base in the city, and British soldiers lobbed flares into the night sky and fired on attackers.

Two more British soldiers were wounded, and witnesses said two British trucks were burned. An Iraqi civilian working on the base was wounded by shrapnel from an exploding mortar shell, the British military said.

Two more American soldiers were killed before dawn Sunday in an attack in northwest Baghdad that also wounded two Iraqi security officers and another American, the military said without elaborating.

Widespread attacks raise deadly toll In a daring escape, American hostage Thomas Hamill pried open doors of the house where he was held hostage and ran half a mile to a military convoy Insurgents attacked A soldier was U.S. forces across Thomas Hamil killed and 10 - Kirkuk Iraq, killing 11 wounded at a Iragi captors. were killed and -30 wounded in a mortar attack two U.S. soldiers and wounded two Iraqi security guards and another American SAUDI ARABIA

The deaths raised the U.S. death toll to 144 since a wave of lence began April 1. At least 746 U.S. service members have dela Iraq since the war began in March 2003. Up to 1,200 Iraqis a were killed in April.

Meanwhile, Marines who pulled back from enforcing a con on the southern city of Fallujah returned to their previous di

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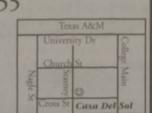
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