



Symbol Lookup

[Login/Register](#) | [Help & Info](#)

Jump to

YOU ARE HERE: [Home](#) > [News](#) > [Top News](#) > [Article](#)

Saddam General in Falluja Questions U.S. Demands

Sun May 2, 2004 10:02 AM ET

[Printer Friendly](#) | [Email Article](#) | [Purchase for Reprint](#)

(Page 1 of 3)



By Fadel Badran

FALLUJA, Iraq (Reuters) - The general from Saddam Hussein's army put in charge of the volatile city of Falluja challenged his U.S. backers Sunday, saying they were wrong to say foreign Islamic guerrillas were behind an insurgency there.

The American public, dismayed by a rising body count in Iraq in the midst of a presidential election campaign, had better news when the U.S. military reported the escape of civilian truck driver Thomas Hamill, held hostage by men who threatened to kill him unless the siege of Falluja was lifted.

Only two days after U.S. forces entrusted General Jasim Mohamed Saleh with restoring order in Falluja, the former member of Saddam's feared Republican Guard dismissed U.S. insistence over the presence of foreign fighters in the city.

"There are no foreign fighters in Falluja," Saleh told Reuters in his home town, which was loyal to Saddam.

After the bloodiest month for U.S. forces since they invaded Iraq in March last year, the respite from the siege of Falluja is also welcome in Washington but U.S. officials are still unsure of the general's past and his present motives.

U.S. officers say some of his men may have fought against them last month. They also say foreign Islamist gunmen, some with possible links to al Qaeda, are fighting in Falluja.

For a second day, former Iraqi soldiers on patrol in the town turned a blind eye to gunmen celebrating "victory" over U.S. Marines. The U.S. forces pulled back from siege positions after a month-long stalemate and gave the general a few days to put down an insurgency they say involves hundreds of foreigners.

But U.S. officials insist 200 or more foreigners may be among the 2,000 or so guerrillas battling their troops since early April. "We stick to our view that 15-20 percent of the guerrillas in Falluja are foreigners," said an official of the U.S.-led occupation authority in Baghdad.

SOME IRAQIS DISMAYED

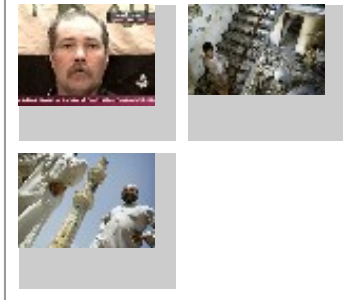
U.S. commanders stressed that if Saleh's Falluja Brigade of up to 1,200 men failed in a few days to ensure the handover of heavy weapons in the city and the death or capture of foreign militants, then the Marines were poised to go in and do it.

"If this collapses we are absolutely prepared to do this by force of arms," one senior U.S. officer said. [Continued ...](#)

© Reuters 2004. All Rights Reserved.

1 | 2 | 3 [Next](#)

More story pictures



Related Articles

- [▶ Saleh Says No Foreign Fighters in Falluja](#)
- [▶ Iraq Flag Not Arabic Enough, Says Pachachi](#)

Reuters Television

9 U.S. Troops Killed in Iraq

PLAY

Falluja Calms

PLAY

Top News

- [▶ Nine U.S. Troops Die, Falluja Command Still at Issue](#)
- [▶ Sharon Party Overwhelmingly Spurns His Gaza Plan](#)
- [▶ Israeli Missiles Kill Four West Bank Militants](#)

MORE →

More Top News

- [▶ Nine U.S. Troops Die, Falluja Command Still at Issue](#)
- [▶ Sharon Party Overwhelmingly Spurns His Gaza Plan](#)
- [▶ Israeli Missiles Kill Four West Bank Militants](#)
- [▶ Top U.S. Officer Can't Rule Out Pattern of Prison Abuse](#)
- [▶ Myers: Ex-Saddam General Not in Charge in Falluja](#)

MORE →