Iraq: the digitalization of slaughter

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In 24 hours of what the US media declared was "fierce" and "intense" fighting, the American military secured control of Baghdad's Saddam Hussein International Airport by the early hours of April 4. It has now encircled the Iraqi capital with 40,000 troops and is bombarding the city.

Iraqi casualties over the 24-hour period number in the thousands. A *New York Times* journalist traveling with the US Third Infantry Division estimated 550 Iraqi troops died attempting to prevent the US forces from moving forward from the Euphrates River, with hundreds more dying in bunkers and fox-holes along the highways into Baghdad. It is being widely reported that at least 400 Iraqi soldiers were killed, and hundreds more wounded, defending the grounds of the airport. Over 400 Iraqis were killed during an attempted counter-attack on the tanks of the Seventh Cavalry as they approached Baghdad's suburbs.

In the southeast, the columns of US marines moving on the capital from Kut advanced past the burnt-out tanks and charred corpses of the Baghdad and Al Nida Divisions of the Iraqi Republican Guard. In the terminology of the Pentagon, the defenders of Baghdad's southeastern and eastern approaches were "degraded" by B-52 carpet bombing, fighter-bomber strikes and a massive artillery bombardment. Some 2,500 survivors of the Republican Guard units are reported to have surrendered.

The American casualties from April 3 to April 4 were reportedly less than a dozen killed and wounded.

In the annals of warfare, such a discrepancy between the casualties of two opposing armies is almost unknown. Such figures are not associated with war, but with the worst atrocities of European colonialism in South America, Africa and Asia, where technically superior invaders laid waste to less developed civilizations and peoples.

Many Americans already suspect what is being done in their name. The military arsenal of the world's largest and most technically advanced economy is carrying out what could be described as digitalized slaughter.

US bombers and jets are stalking Iraq, being fed targets for destruction electronically by satellites, surveillance aircraft and forward observers. The road ahead of the advancing American ground forces is being cleared by B-52 carpetbombing, artillery barrages and strafing by helicopter gunships.

In many cases, the Iraqi soldiers being mowed down as they launch desperate attacks on US tanks and armored vehicles are traumatized young men who have endured days of bombing and seen dozens of their comrades incinerated or blown apart. Where surviving Iraqi tanks have been able to engage US forces in open combat, they have been rapidly destroyed by the American armor, which is vastly superior in technology, mobility and firepower.

The Bush administration, the Pentagon and the utterly shameless American media are gloating in the destruction that has already been inflicted. Millions of people both in the US and internationally, however, are feeling nothing but revulsion and horror.

The last ten days have witnessed a massive escalation in the violence against Iraq. Following the collapse of Washington's initial predictions of a rapid surrender of the Iraqi military and an enthusiastic welcome for US forces by the Iraqi people, the Bush administration ordered the massacre of all those resisting the invasion.

Little of the real impact of the war is even being reported in the US. Far from expressing any concern over the fate of the Iraqi people, the ire of the American media is being directed against its Arab and European counterparts, which are publishing reports and photos indicating the actual scale of Iraqi casualties.

The Pentagon has made a great deal of its claims to be attacking only military targets. These claims are

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belied by the steadily rising death toll among Iraqi civilians. Moreover, they mask the fact that in the name of “liberating” Iraq, the US is killing or maiming the flower of Iraq’s youth, who were called up to defend the country from foreign invaders.

It is already apparent that the Iraqi army and the general population, unable to resist the American forces in any meaningful sense by conventional military means, are resorting to guerilla operations and suicide attacks, as occupied peoples have throughout history.

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