

## Basra Bizarre: SAS Commandos Arrested and Sprung

Posted by

Monday, 19 September 2005 13:45 - Last Updated Monday, 19 September 2005 13:45

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### **Basra Bizarre: SAS Commandos Arrested and Sprung**

**PEJ News** - C. L. Cook - An oddity in Iraq yesterday. Two British members of the elite SAS arrested by Iraqi police following a gun-fight at a checkpoint are now back in British hands after a dramatic jail break pulled off by fellow soldiers.

*www.pej.org*

[Update (S20 5:49 pdt) The [Washington Post Foreign Service is reporting](#) Basra police charging the SAS men were captured during a bomb-laying mission.

[Reuters has released photos](#)

of the equipment allegedly taken from the British soldier's car.

[Chinese news agency](#)

claims confirmation of conspiracy charges from unnamed Iraq Interior Ministry source. And, for Mike Whitney's take

[see here](#)

. Global Research.ca

[adds this](#)

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[Update II (S21 20:17 pdt) [Corporate news sources](#) are down-playing the root cause of the growing unrest in the south of Iraq. No mention is made of the car-bombing dimension to this, and the tale of the dead soldiers, and five subsequent civilian deaths exacted during the British assault on the Basra jail. - lex]

[Update III (O21 23:00 pdt) Sean Rayment of London's Sunday Telegraph transcribed the "real" story behind the SAS's bizarre doings in Basra that fateful day. ( ['Captured SAS Men Spying on 'Drill Torturer'](#);

Oct. 16, 2005). According to Rayment, the pair of intrepids were merely carrying out "surveillance" in the hopes of tracking down a particularly barbarous Iraqi police official. The article is full of the most gruesome details as to the methods allegedly employed. So many grizzly factoids did Sean reveal, that many readers could be forgiven, in the midst of their outraged indignation, for forgetting some of the finer details left out of the revised version of reality, doubtless approved before press time by military censors.

Not mentioned in the article: weaponry and "bomb-making" materiel found in the car the SAS men were driving; why they opened fire on coalition partner Iraqi police; the British impounding of the car following raids on the police station and jail; the extent of Iraqi casualties incurred during the rescue operation; the prevalent belief in southern Iraq and Iran of British involvement in wide-spread bombing campaigns occurring in the area.

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September 19, 2005

Two British commandos, members of the secretive SAS were arrested by Iraqi police yesterday in the southern Iraqi city of Basra. The two men, dressed in Arab garb and driving an unmarked car, drew the attention of police. As the car was approached, [shots were fired](#). Conflicting reports make the timeline of the exchange of fire unclear, and there are also discrepancies concerning casualties, some saying one policeman was wounded and/or killed, others claiming two police dead, while still others claim none were killed. But what is clear: the two soldiers were taken into custody and questioned by an Iraqi judge.

Some hours after the incident, British reinforcements arrived at the jail, demanding the release of their colleagues. When refused, the [British knocked down at least one wall](#) of the jail. Reports cite the rescue employed either a tank, several tanks, or armoured personnel carriers: Again, accounts are diverse. Everyone does agree though, there was helicopter support for the rescue operation, and at least one tank was later set afire by angry mobs, hurling stones and petrol bombs. Crowds had apparently been drawn to the jail by flying squads of rabble-rousers, blaring news of a killed policeman and the arrest of the British over car-mounted loudspeakers.

Word of the shooting spread through the city, already edgy because of the heightened bombing campaigns against religious sites and observances. (This week marks the beginning of the Karbala Festival, marking the birth of [Imam Mohammed al-Mahdi](#) in 868 A.D. on the Christian calendar. It's expected to draw as many as 3 million pilgrims, providing ample opportunities for car and suicide bombings.) These attacks have been cited by Iranian officials as a deliberate ploy by the Americans and their allies, ostensibly to justify the continuation of the occupation. It's a [shared](#) [sentiment broadly](#) in Iraq.

Curiously, B.B.C. World Service Radio reports initially identified the car the SAS drove as being: "full of explosives and bomb making equipment." It's a quote this reporter is unable at this hour (S19 6pm pdt) to corroborate. [\[update \(D20\)\]](#)  
In fact, none among the several articles relating to this strange tale broach the questions: [Why did the shooting start?](#)  
Why were the men there? What was in the car?

Media emphasis is now quickly shifting to the block-buster rescue mission. An estimated 150 others held in the prison took the opportunity to escape custody. But, that too is a point made moot by counter-claims stating none escaped.

One thing is certain tonight: The relatively quiet British-Iraqi relationship in the south is fast deteriorating.

Also today, 38 year-old reporter Fakhre Haider was found dead in Basra. His body showed signs of severe trauma. He was shot to death. Haider becomes the [55th journalist killed](#) in Iraq since the fall of the Hussein regime.

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**Chris Cook** hosts [Gorilla Radio](#), broad/webcast from the University of Victoria, Canada. He also serves as a contributing editor to PEJ News. You can check out the [GR Blog](#) here.