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An Iraqi man rushes to the spot where a car bomb exploded in front of the home of a senior Iraqi security official in Baghdad.

Attack Site Lacks Wedding Evidence

U.S. photos taken at place of alleged celebration show items that could have triggered bombs

By ANTHONY BREWSTER
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq — The U.S. military said Saturday it has found "no evidence of a wedding" at the site of an airstrike last week near the Syrian border and said evidence so far suggested the target was a desert base for foreign terrorists seeking to disguise themselves as Iraqis.

He said white powder also was found that could have been cocaine. The border area is a popular route for smugglers.

"None of the bodies had identification of any kind on them, no ID cards, no wallets, no pictures," Kammit said. "They had watches, and that was about the only way you could identify one person from another."

He said the absence of identification, as well as the remoteness of the area, suggested that this was a high-risk meeting of high-level, anti-coalition forces.

The military's finding contrasts sharply with statements by survivors as well as officials in Baghdad. On Thursday, a well-known wedding singer Hameed al-Hadi, who was in Baghdad, said his family said he was killed in the airstrike.

But Faisal al-Hadi, who runs a restaurant, denied the presence of foreign fighters in their group. Members of the clan said the attack began about 10 minutes after the wedding festivities had broken up for the night.

Kammit said farm vehicles were found, but that they showed no signs of being used for anything. No, he added, were there any signs of a wedding celebration.

There was no evidence of a wedding, no decorations, musical instruments found, no large quantities of food or leftover servings one would expect from a wedding celebration, he said. "No gifts. The area were almost all military gear."

Kammit said he had been looking for evidence of a wedding celebration, but he said it may have been just some kind of celebration, and he was just in the middle of the desert by some people conducting criminal or terrorist activities.

Suicide Bomber Kills Four

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Saturday's suicide blast outside the home of Abdul-Jabbar Youssef al-Sheikhli, the deputy interior minister in charge of security, hurled two cars into the front lawn of his house. Police fired warning shots to disperse.

Al-Sheikhli was injured in the forehead and right arm, said Hassan Idris, a Health Ministry official.

Bodyguards fired on the bomber's car as it approached, and Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt, the chief U.S. military spokesman in Iraq, "Three bodyguards and a woman were killed as well as the bomber," he said. Iraqi authorities reported four police died.

Al-Sheikhli belongs to the Shiite Muslim Dawa party, which lost a prominent member in another fatal car bombing on Monday. The president of the Iraqi Governing Council, Dawa member Izzat Ibrahim al-Dulaymi, was killed along with at least six other people near

the headquarters of the U.S.-run coalition in the capital.

The Monthebar and Jihad Group, which claimed responsibility for Salameh's death, said it carried out the attack Sunday as a warning to the United States and its allies.

"They will not be safe from the hand of God's retaliation, then the angels' retribution, and that they should be ready," said the statement posted on an Islamic Web site.

It said "martyr" Ahmed al-Shami Abu Abdel Rahman, from Qadisiyah, Syria, drove a car bomb to take (al-Sheikhli) to bed."

The group's leader is believed to be Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian wanted by the United States for organizing al-Qaida operations in Iraq and suspected of beheading American civilians Nicholas Berg.

In Najaf, south of Baghdad, fighting broke out Saturday between U.S. forces and al-Qaida members. Iraqi police directorate and the governor's office. At least 10 peo-

ple were injured in the Saturday clashes, which erupted between al-Qaida fighters and U.S. troops after the arrest of Mohammed al-Dibabani, an aide to the fiery cleric, a hospital employee said.

On Friday, five people were killed and 20 injured in a clash between al-Sadr's fighters and U.S. troops after the arrest of Mohammed al-Dibabani, an aide to the fiery cleric, a hospital employee said.

The people were arrested during the last night raid in Karbala, but there were no fatalities during the incursion. Earlier, al-Sadr said both militants and U.S. forces had agreed to withdraw from the city.

Kammit said the coalition had reported some forces, but had not withdrawn. Early Friday, U.S. troops pulled out of a central mosque that they had occupied after warning insurgents who had used it as a base.

The police chief from Karbala in fact came to the other day and had been encouraged to start bringing back in Iraqi police into the city of Karbala, Kammit said.

Iraqi leaders in Karbala have been trying to negotiate an end to the fighting, though coalition officials have stood by their position that al-Sadr should be ousted and "face justice." The cleric, who launched an uprising against the coalition last month, is wanted in the killing of a rival moderate cleric last year.

Also Saturday, the military said a U.S. soldier was killed and three others from the U.S. Army's 1st Armored Division were wounded in an attack on a desert vehicle south of Baghdad, and a Marine died in a suburbian incident.

He said suspicious materi-

Richardson's Backing of Candidates in Primary Unusual

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Legislature and the Albuquerque-based 1st Congressional District. He has also lent support through a state fund for state Public Regulation Commission candidate Ben R. Lujan of Santa Fe, the son of House Speaker Ben Lujan, D-Santa Fe.

"These people have worked side by side with the governor to ensure that really critical legislation is passed in this state," said Amanda Cooper of Corrales, director of Moving America Forward, the national political action committee headed by Richardson.

Barnett, New Mexico's Republican national commissioner, longtime conservative leader and Albuquerque lawyer, is supporting four state legislative candidates and a state Supreme Court candidate in Republican primary contests, according to Rep. Jon Thompson, R-Albuquerque, who is organizing the campaign for Barnett.

Barnett said he supports people who will be active in the party, raising money, helping other candidates, educating and presenting a good image for the Republicans.

"No one's entitled to anything," said Barnett, who is being challenged for his party post by former state Rep. George Bufford of Albuquerque. "It's running for election as national commissioner. I'm not entitled to that."

Richardson's efforts are based on the political action committee he started last spring.

His Moving America Forward

Richardson, Barnett's choices

- Gov. Bill Richardson is supporting the following lawmakers in the June 15 Democratic primary, according to Amanda Cooper, director of his political action committee:
- Sen. John Pinto, D-Denver, who leads Donnell of Shirock.
- Sen. Luis Romo, D-Gallup, who faces Gloria Mae Shurt of Gallup and John R. Thompson of Durack.
- Sen. Carlos Cisneros, D-Quincy, whose primary opponent dropped out.
- Sen. Leonard Flores, D-Corralvill, who faces Downpoint, who faces Everett Chavez of Santa Domingo Pueblo.
- Sen. Roman Aleman, D-Corralvill, who faces John Garcia, who faces John

ward group has a \$1.5 million budget and is also involved in voter registration efforts in other states.

In New Mexico, Cooper and the people Richardson supports have backed education and food tax bills, for example.

Examples of help offered to primary candidates include contributions, campaign mail, radio spots and recorded phone messages. Cooper said.

For example, Richardson helped Rep. Sherry Williams Stapleton, D-Albuquerque, with a campaign mailer to House District 19, Cooper said. Williams Stapleton is a career educator who supports the governor's public school initiatives, such as their constitutional amendments that gave more money to schools and overrode power to the state.

Richardson is helping the following candidates in contested Republican primaries in New Mexico, according to his aide, Jon Thompson:

- Justice Joe Young of Albuquerque, who is challenging Rep. Rich White, R-Albuquerque.
- Rep. Larry Larragüe, R-Albuquerque, who faces Rep. Burgo.
- Mario Burgos of Cedar Crest, who is challenging Charles Helzer of Pecos and Kathy McCoy of Cedar Crest.
- Sen. Gay Kennen, R-Hobbs, who faces Bill James of Langdon.
- Ned Faur, a Republican candidate for state Supreme Court, who is challenging Justice Edward L. Chavez, a Democrat.

Richardson has supported Richard Romero over Albuquerque physician Miles Nelson in the contest to decide who will face Wilson in the November general election.

Richardson has also backed fund raising for candidates in the general election — where he is expected to help state candidates, Cooper said.

Barnett's law office on Wyoming NE is often crossed with eager young Republicans dogging through campaign work.

College kids, political operatives, a few state legislators and Thompson make up "Team MDB," which are Barnett's political candidates in contested primary races for state District Court and Albuquerque Metropolitan Court.

And Richardson has supported Romero over Albuquerque

Cheney

The effort is led by Thompson, a state legislator who should be expected to lead for the Public Regulation Commission after a division driving earlier this year.

"A lot of what we're doing is helping candidates that don't have any experience," Thompson said.

The team helps with money, organization, issue development, campaign matters, phone calls and opposition research, Thompson said.

"There's a lot at stake for conservatives, and we're not interested in protecting weak members," Thompson said. Referring to the Capitol, he said: "It's not a nice clubhouse. You can get blackballed at any time."

Barnett said he believes in competition, or "the marketplace of ideas."

He added, "It's the same story every cycle. You need to support people you've known and worked with over the years. That's the primary reason you get involved."

Barnett's group supports Justice Fias Young, a former judge analyst in the legislature.

Young is challenging House District 10 incumbent Bob White, who says he's really fighting Barnett.

"If you don't love their line, then they'll come after you," White said of Barnett's supporters. "And let me come. I'll take 'em on."

When asked if contested primaries hurt the party, White said: "Yes. The Republicans' party of New Mexico is fractured right now."