

Shoe-throwing Iraqi journalist gets 3 years

Stars and Stripes

The Iraqi journalist who threw his shoes at then-President George W. Bush during a Baghdad press conference last year has been convicted of assault and sentenced to three years in prison.

The sentence was announced Thursday in an Iraqi court.

Muntadher al-Zaidi could have received up to 15 years in prison for his actions, which took place during Bush's final visit to Baghdad, in December.

Al-Zaidi threw both of his shoes at Bush — who was conducting a joint press conference with Prime

Minister Nouri al-Maliki — and shouted, "This is your farewell kiss, you dog! This is from the widows, the orphans and those who were killed in Iraq."

Some Iraqis and others in the Arab world hailed al-Zaidi as a hero.

According to news agencies, the Iraqi courtroom was cleared



al-Zaidi

Thursday before the verdict and sentence were read.

Al-Zaidi shouted "Long live Iraq!" when the sentence was read, according to wire reports.

Defense lawyers said they would appeal the verdict.

In a February appearance at the Central Criminal Court of Iraq, al-Zaidi had pleaded innocent to charges of assaulting a foreign leader and said his actions were the result of "violations that are committed against the Iraqi people" and a "natural response to the occupation."

Al-Zaidi had been held in Iraqi custody since the shoe-throwing.

U.S. deaths

As of Wednesday, at least 4,257 members of the U.S. military had died in the Iraq war since it began in March 2003, according to an AP count.

The figure includes eight military civilians killed in action. At least 3,424 military personnel died as a result of hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

No deaths were reported by

the military.

The latest identifications reported by the military:

■ Marine Lance Cpl. Patrick A. Malone, 21, Ocala, Fla.; died Tuesday as a result of a non-hostile incident in Anbar province; was assigned to 2nd Tank Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Lejeune, N.C.

From The Associated Press

Oubaidy market seen as gateway to progress

By STEVE MRAZ
Stars and Stripes

OUBAIDY, Iraq — Approaching the market in this area of eastern Baghdad, one is nearly overwhelmed by its sights, smells and sounds.

Covered by flies and unrefrigerated, fish for sale lie in the sun.

Residents snake through the crowded narrow alleys between vegetable stands.

Children pester soldiers for watches, pens, chocolate, money or anything else.

Once past the squatters' stands, the market improves drastically. Things are calmer, cleaner and shaded inside. Merchants in hard-stand storefronts sell spices, scarves, shoes and other sundries. For a moment, it's not unlike flea markets in some European cities.

The 82nd Airborne Division's 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment is undertaking an effort to improve the Oubaidy market, which it sees as a vehicle to better overall conditions in the area.

"Oubaidy is really the fringe," said Maj. Jeff Bramlett, the executive officer of 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment. "It's right on the edge of some really bad areas. It's gotten bad in the past. It's sort of on the tipping point. What we're trying to do is come in, get the Neighborhood Action Councils involved, get their input, try to get them on board and then we come in with the projects."

The goal of the projects is to establish a safe, secure market that would be an economic engine in the area, providing jobs and injecting money into the local economy.

A throng of illegal squatters' stands impedes entry into the formal market.

"It doesn't facilitate a lot of business at times," said Capt. Adisa King, commander of Company A, 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment. "People just kind of gather there. What we want to do is show them that, economically, you can get yourself sustained and this is how we can help you."

A better market would also serve as a viable alternative for those tempted to engage in violent activity — a point Bramlett summed up in a conversation with the owner of a fruit stand.

"Who wants to blow something up when they can make money?" Bramlett asked.

Nine different projects are slated for



PHOTOS BY BEN BLOKER/Stars and Stripes

Capt. Scott Young of the 82nd Airborne Division's 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, patrols a street in the impoverished town of Oubaidy, Iraq. Coalition forces are specifically targeting the trash-laden market in hopes of strengthening the historically neglected suburb of the capital.

the Oubaidy market. Specifically, the battalion wants to increase accessibility to the market by improving the surrounding roads. Some roads in the area are flooded with 10 to 14 inches of sewage. Work should begin on the projects later this month. Additionally, micro-grants of a few thousand dollars each will also be offered to help business owners in the market. During a visit to the market Wednesday, Bramlett told merchants to talk to their Neighborhood Action Council about how they want the market improved.

The market-improvement plan in Oubaidy is something the battalion is working on to replicate in the other areas where it operates.

"Right now, it varies from area to area," Bramlett said. "Markets are a good focus for us. It's something that people are behind. It brings in a lot of other things. Micro-power generation is another one to address a lot of the energy concerns. It varies a little bit, depending on what the needs of the people are in that area."

E-mail Steve Mraz at: mrazs@estripes.osd.mil



Spc. Frederick Lynds, a soldier from 82nd Airborne Division's 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, jokes around with his Iraqi National Police counterpart after patrolling a nearby market Wednesday in Oubaidy, Iraq.