



KERIK OFFERS BOUNTY - \$2,500 FOR INFO ON IRAQ HIT-SQUAD GOONS

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WASHINGTON - Former New York Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik yesterday offered \$2,500 rewards for information leading to the arrests of pro-Saddam killers - as seven more Americans were wounded in attacks.

With anti-U.S. hit squads becoming bolder and better organized, Kerik, who is now running Iraq's Interior Ministry for the U.S.-led civilian administration, announced the rewards as part of a massive effort to stem the violence that threatens to turn post-war Iraq into a disaster zone.

"I urge the Iraqi people to come forward and take these people off the streets of the country," Kerik said.

Kerik spoke on yet another day of widespread violence as U.S. and British forces were targeted with increasingly sophisticated terrorist attacks in several regions of the strife-torn country yesterday, creating fresh concerns among military leaders and policymakers who are debating whether to send more troops to the region.

In the latest round of attacks, pro-Saddam goon squads in Baghdad dropped a homemade bomb off a bridge onto a moving military convoy injuring two soldiers. Two more soldiers were injured when their Humvee hit a land mine, also in Baghdad.

And in Kirkuk, the oil rich city in northern Iraq, hit men fired rocket-propelled grenades at another convoy injuring three U.S. soldiers.

A U.S. military base in Balad, south of Baghdad was also targeted with a mortar attack and a British soldier was wounded in a sniper attack in Basra, according to coalition military officials.

In the most vicious attack, three Iraqis, including a 13-year-old boy, were killed when insurgents drove up to a Baghdad police station and pretended to need medical help and then threw grenades at cops who rushed to help them.

Witnesses said the people were killed in a firefight when U.S. troops chased the attackers as they sped away.

The Pentagon says 30 Americans have died in hostile fire, 43 in noncombat accidents and more than 200 have been injured since President Bush declared the end to major combat operations in Iraq on May 1.

The increased frequency and ferocity of the attacks has prompted the Pentagon and U.S. Central Command to study whether more troops are needed and whether some heavy armored units already in Iraq need to be replaced with light infantry and more military police, military officials said.