

Clashes in Kut, Iraq, kill 42

by UPI

BAGHDAD - Violence raged around Baghdad and in southern Iraq, where clashes between Iraqi security forces and rebel militia members killed at least 100 people. Fighting between Iraqi forces and Shiite militia in the southeastern Iraqi city of Kut Thursday killed 42 people and wounded 17, an Iraqi Interior Ministry official told CNN. U.S. military officials said militants killed two members of the U.S.-backed Sons of Iraq in Salaheddin province. Fighting in oil-rich Basra and other Shiite regions persisted Thursday between Iraqi security forces and militias such as hard-line Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr and his and his Mehdi fighters. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, who has been overseeing the operation, set a Saturday deadline for militants to surrender their weapons. Since the fighting began Tuesday, more than 100 people have died in Basra, Baghdad, Hilla, Kut and Diwaniya. Also, about 30 Iraqi militants were killed Wednesday when coalition airplanes and helicopters fired on gunmen in Babylon, an Iraqi security source told KUNA, the Kuwaiti news agency. Meanwhile, Iraqi forces shut down al-Kathimiya, a Shiite area in northern Baghdad, when U.S. forces reported at least 16 rockets were fired into the Green Zone. Only residents may enter al-Khathmiya, KUNA said.

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