

Coalition Units Thrust Into Heart of Fallujah

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NEAR FALLUJAH, Iraq — U.S. troops powered their way into the center of the insurgent stronghold of Fallujah on Tuesday, overwhelming small bands of guerrillas with massive force, searching homes along the city's deserted, narrow passageways and using loudspeakers to try to goad militants onto the streets

As of Tuesday night, the fighting had killed 10 U.S. troops and two members of the Iraqi security force, the U.S. military announced. The toll already equaled the 10 American military deaths when Marines besieged the city for three weeks in April.

In Fallujah, U.S. troops were advancing more rapidly than in April, when insurgents fought a force of fewer than 2,000 Marines to a standstill in a three-week siege. It ended with the Americans handing over the city to a local force, which lost control to Islamic militants.

This time, the U.S. military has sent up to 15,000 U.S. and Iraqi troops into the battle, backed by tanks, artillery and attack aircraft. More than 24 hours after launching the main attack, U.S. soldiers and Marines had punched through insurgent strongholds in the north and east of Fallujah and reached the major east-west highway that bisects the city.

Before the major ground assault that began Monday night, the U.S. military reported 42 insurgents killed. Fallujah doctors reported 12 people dead. Since then, there has been no specific information on Iraqi death tolls.

Electricity has been cut off in Fallujah, a city of 200,000 to 300,000 people. Residents were without running water and were worried about food shortages since most shops were closed.

The Sunni clerics' Association of Muslim Scholars called for a boycott of the elections. The association's director, Harith al-Dhari, said the Sunnis could not take part in an election held "over the corpses of those killed in Fallujah."

The call is expected to have little resonance within the rival Shiite Muslim community, which forms about 60 percent of Iraq's 26 million people. Sunnis make up the core of the insurgency, and U.S. officials have expressed hope that a successful election could convince many Sunnis that they have a future in a democratic Iraq.

1. Thus far, 1,145 Americans have been killed in Iraq. What percent is represented by the number killed near Fallujah as of Tuesday night?
2. Assuming all 60 percent of Iraq's 26 million people boycott the elections, approximately how many would vote?
3. How many more U.S. and Iraqi troops are participating in this attack on Fallujah than the three-week siege this past April?