



## British troops freed in Iraq appear nervous on TV

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Source: Reuters , by Sam Savage (?)

BASRA, Iraq (Reuters) - Two undercover soldiers freed in Basra in a British raid appeared nervous in television footage of their detention which showed wigs, Arab headdresses and weapons apparently used in their mission.

The tired, unshaven pair were shown seated beside the disguises, an anti-tank missile, other weapons and communications equipment in Iraqi state television footage.

One of the soldiers, who appeared to be in his thirties, had spots of blood on his white T-shirt. At one point his comrade, wearing a blue T-shirt, put on one of the thick black wigs and a headdress lying on a table, apparently at the instruction of a policeman who joked that he was a Shi'ite descendent of Islam's Prophet Mohammad.

Images of the soldiers could hurt British efforts to maintain a low-profile approach to security in Basra, unlike their American allies, who Iraqis complain have fueled resentment in other parts of the country with heavy-handed tactics.

The pair sat forward in their chairs as police discussed the events that led to their detention. One recalled how a crowd formed around the British soldiers' car when they were detained.

Another pointed out that the pair had electronic positioning devices.

As their medical kit was searched, a policeman cautioned his colleagues that the black bag filled with medicine may have a bomb inside.

It may have been another joke. But some Iraqis may take it seriously after two and a half years of suicide bombings, shootings and kidnappings that have plagued the country since U.S. and British troops toppled Saddam Hussein.

British troops used an armored fighting vehicle on Monday to burst into a jail to rescue the soldiers. The British commander in Basra said he ordered the operation after receiving information they had been handed over to "militia elements".

The operation followed rioting that began, according to police and local officials, when the two men fired on a police patrol. At least two Iraqis were killed in the violence.

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