

Rockets Flying in Iraq

Three different sources are reporting that rockets or Scud missiles were launched from Iraq towards Kuwait.

Three rockets have hit the border area between Kuwait and Iraq, Al Arabiya TV reported early on Friday quoting diplomatic sources. Al Orouba, the pro-Qaddafi TV channel, reported the rockets had targeted Kuwait's Mubarak port, which is under construction and has been the subject of arguments between oil-producing Iraq and Kuwait, which share a small border. But the Dubai-based channel Al Arabiya said the Katyusha rockets did not target the port.

(<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/08/26/164105.html>)

Three rockets fired in Iraq's southern oil port city of Basra landed inside Iraq and were not aimed at Kuwait or the disputed Mubarak port, an Iraqi official said on Friday. Ali al-Maliki, head of the Basra provincial council's security committee, said the rockets were aimed at the former U.S. prison camp Bucca and had a range of only one kilometre.

"The rockets targeted the (former) Bucca prison building, which is used by foreign companies," Maliki told Reuters. "Security forces managed to seize the vehicle which was used to launch the rockets."

(<http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=26366>)

Three Scud missiles flying from Iraq to Kuwait early Friday, Aug. 26 were launched by the Iran-backed Ketaeb Hizballah of Iraq, the first such attacks since the US invaded Iraq in 2003. It was also the first time any Middle East terrorist group had used Scud missiles.

They exploded on open ground, but debkafile's sources report that this round was meant as a warning for Kuwait to halt construction of the Grand Mubarak Port opposite the Iraqi shore - or else it would be followed by a massive volley. (<http://www.debka.com/article/21244/>)

Please all of the referenced articles for further important information.

Analysis. Who to believe? Al Arabiya quotes two different sources with two different answers. Asharq al-Awsat tells an entirely different story. Debka agrees with half of the al Arabiya story and provides much more detail. So what really happened?

Three rockets were fired in the general direction of south. They might have been Scuds which have a significantly longer range than one kilometer. Even the home made Qassem rockets flying out of Gaza have a range of longer than one kilometer (.625 miles). Short range rockets are generally anti-tank rockets not bombardment type rockets. Considering that Saddam's forces were equipped with primarily Soviet and Russian weapons and equipment, truck mounted missiles would most likely be bombardment type rockets. Scuds are also truck mounted on a transporter-erector-launcher (TEL).

The al Arabiya article identifies the missiles as Scuds as does the Debka article. The Debka article also reports on the units of the Kuwaiti armed forces had previously moved troops to Boubiyan Island to defend the Mubarak port construction. If Kuwait expects saboteurs from Iraq then what ever kind of rocket was launched was probably a reaction to the Kuwaiti moves.

So Scuds or Katyushas? Most likely Grad (Katyusha) missiles. The Grad is the current bombardment missile of choice for the Iranian supplied "resistance" groups. It is a very simple missile to launch

either from vehicles (it was originally designed for a truck mounted multi-tube launcher) or from single platforms. The Scud is a large missile requiring a professional crew to fuel it and launch it unless it is a solid fuel Scud. I'm not real sure the Iranians would part with any of their solid fueled missiles let alone three of them for such a minor demonstration. Nor do I believe that the Iranians would sanction the use of any of Saddam's left over Scuds for this kind of operation. Grads would be just as effective as a means of sending a message.

A couple of things are apparent though. These kinds of actions are not something the local Hezbollah group thought up. This event was most likely planned in the Iranian revolutionary Guards Qods Force headquarters and the Hezbollah group was chosen to execute it probably with the supervision of Qods Force members. Second, Iran is willing to risk the unlikely chance that Kuwait might actually respond militarily against Iraq or at least against its agents there. Kuwait may yet respond to this attack but in very quiet ways. In the meantime, everybody who needs it has plausible deniability.