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press releases**Troop Level Adjustment in Iraq**

Baghdad, Iraq

December 23, 2005

- Military commanders have recommended a troop level adjustment, and the President accepted their recommendation.
- The adjustment is attributed to the growing capability and effectiveness of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), its leadership, and its organization.
- It is also due to the continued handover of security responsibility to Iraqis and the country's continued political and economic progress.
- The decision will result in a reduction of U.S. force levels of approximately two combat brigade-equivalents, or about 7000 troops, in Iraq.
- The effect of these adjustments will likely reduce the forces in Iraq by the Spring of 2006 below the 138,000 baseline.

Continued growth and development of the Iraqi security forces:

- In the past year, trained and equipped Iraqi Security Forces nearly doubled, from 115,000 in November 2004 to more than 216,000 today.
- More than 125 Army and Special Police battalions are in the fight, with more than 50 battalions in the lead for counterinsurgency operations.
- Iraqi Security Forces displayed improved performance during recent offensive combat operations, for example in Tal Afar and the Western Euphrates River Valley.
- The Iraqi Security Forces performed exceptionally in support of the Dec. 15th election.

Successful transitioning of security responsibility:

- In March three battalions controlled battle space in Baghdad; now 33 battalions control battle space throughout Iraq.
- 50 percent of Baghdad Province is under operational control of ISF.
- 30 of 110 Forward Operating Bases have been turned over to the Iraqis or closed.

Continued political and economic progress.

- A permanent government democratically elected by the citizens of Iraq will soon be seated.
- Sunni Arabs voted in large numbers, defying the terrorists and Saddamists who threatened all who participate with death and called on Iraqis to reject the political process.
- All major constituencies in Iraq have shown a willingness to work within the political process to advance their legitimate interests.
- Many cities, such as Mosul and Najaf, are coming back to life.
- Iraq's economy is growing - thousands of new businesses have opened and personal income is up.
- Iraq's GDP is expected to grow in real terms by 3.7 percent in 2005 and nearly 17 percent in 2006.
- According to one survey, seven in 10 Iraqis say their own lives are going well, and nearly two-thirds expect things to improve in the next year.
- Significant progress is being realized, but more work remains, including building ministerial capacity and further developing leadership and readiness at all levels of Iraqi Security Forces.
- The capacity of the Iraqi government and Iraqi Security Forces weigh more in the recommendations consideration process than specific levels of violence or attacks.

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