



For Immediate Release  
Office of the Press Secretary  
July 24, 2007

## Fact Sheet: Al Qaeda in Iraq

[President Bush Discusses War on Terror in South Carolina](#)

[White House News](#)

**Today, President Bush Spoke To The Airmen Of The 437th And 315th Airlift Wings In Charleston, South Carolina.** The President praised them for their courageous service and described America's primary enemy in Iraq—al Qaeda in Iraq.

- **Since September 11, 2001, Airmen Of Team Charleston Have Deployed Across The Globe In Support Of The War On Terror.** Their efforts in global airlift are saving lives and bringing security to our country. America is grateful for their courage in the cause of freedom.
- **The Al Qaeda Terrorists We Face In Iraq Are Part Of The Same Enemy That Attacked The United States On 9/11, And They Still Intend To Attack Us At Home.** While there is a debate in Washington about al Qaeda's role in Iraq, the facts are that al Qaeda in Iraq is an organization founded by foreign terrorists, led largely by foreign terrorists, and loyal to Osama bin Laden.

### Al Qaeda In Iraq's Founder And His Successor Were Foreign Terrorists, Not Iraqis

**Al Qaeda In Iraq Was Founded By Foreign Terrorists Linked To Senior Al Qaeda Leadership.** Al Qaeda in Iraq founder Abu Musab al Zarqawi was not an Iraqi and neither is his successor Abu Ayyub al-Masri.

- **Jordanian Terrorist Abu Musab Al Zarqawi Founded Al Qaeda In Iraq And Pledged Allegiance To Osama Bin Laden.**
  - Before 9/11, Zarqawi ran a terrorist camp in Afghanistan.
  - According to our intelligence community, Zarqawi had longstanding relations with senior al Qaeda leaders and had met with Osama bin Laden and Ayman Zawahiri.
  - In 2001, Zaraqawi left Afghanistan and eventually went to Iraq to set up operations with terrorist associates after Coalition forces destroyed his Afghan training camp.
  - In 2004, Zarqawi and his terrorist group formally joined al Qaeda, pledged allegiance to Osama bin Laden, and promised to "follow his orders in jihad."
  - Bin Laden publicly declared Zarqawi the "Prince of Al Qaeda in Iraq" and instructed terrorists in Iraq to "listen to him and obey him."

- **Zarqawi's Successor Abu Ayyub Al-Masri Is An Egyptian Who Also Has Deep And Longstanding Ties To Al Qaeda Senior Leadership.**
  - Abu Ayyub has collaborated with Ayman Zawahiri for more than two decades.
  - Before 9/11, Abu Ayyub spent time with al Qaeda in Afghanistan and taught classes indoctrinating others in al Qaeda's radical ideology.
  - Last year Osama bin Laden tried to send a terrorist leader named Abd al-Hadi al Iraqi to help Abu Ayyub.
    - According to our intelligence community, Abd al-Hadi was a senior advisor to bin Laden who served as his top commander in Afghanistan.
    - Abd al-Hadi never made it to Iraq. He was captured last year and now is held at Guantanamo Bay.
  
- **Our Intelligence Community Reports That Many Of Al Qaeda In Iraq's Other Senior-Most Leaders Are Also Foreign Terrorists.** These foreign terrorists include:
  - A Syrian who is al Qaeda in Iraq's emir in Baghdad
  - A Saudi who is al Qaeda in Iraq's top spiritual and legal advisor
  - An Egyptian who fought in Afghanistan in the 1990s and has met with Osama bin Laden
  - A Tunisian we believe plays a key role in managing foreign fighters
  - Last month, Coalition forces killed senior al Qaeda facilitator Mehmet Yilmaz, a Turkish national who fought with al Qaeda in Afghanistan and met with Khalid Shaykh Muhammad and other senior al Qaeda leaders.

### **Al Qaeda In Iraq Tries To Deceive Others Into Thinking It Is An Iraqi-Led Operation**

**The Recent Capture Of Al Qaeda In Iraq's Most Senior Iraqi Official Reveals That The Group Is Led By Foreigners Who Are Trying To Deceive Others Into Thinking They Are Iraqis.** On July 4, Coalition forces captured a senior al Qaeda in Iraq leader named Khalid Abdul Fattah Da'ud Mahmoud al-Mashadani, the highest ranking Iraqi in the organization.

- Mashadani said the foreign leaders of al Qaeda in Iraq went to extraordinary lengths to promote the fiction that al Qaeda in Iraq is led by Iraqis.
- Mashadani said al Qaeda in Iraq went so far as to create a figurehead whom they named "Omar al-Baghdadi" so that Iraqi fighters would think they are following the orders of an Iraqi instead of a foreigner.
- Mashadani said Abu Ayyub and his team of foreign leaders, not Iraqis, make most of the operational decisions for al Qaeda in Iraq.

**According To Our Intelligence Community, Al Qaeda Senior Leaders And Al Qaeda's Leaders In Iraq "See Al Qaeda In Iraq As Part Of Al Qaeda's Decentralized Chain Of Command, Not As A Separate Group."** Al Qaeda in Iraq is not just collaborating with al Qaeda leaders or maintaining contacts with them, they have formally merged with them and pledged *baya'at*, or loyalty, to Osama bin Laden.

- Our intelligence community concludes that "Al Qaeda and its regional node in Iraq are united in their overarching strategy."

## **Al Qaeda Is The Greatest Threat To Security In Iraq Due To Their Constant Attempts At Inflaming Sectarian War Through Large-Scale Bombings**

### **Our Intelligence Community Believes Al Qaeda Is The Most Dangerous Of The Sunni Extremist Groups In Iraq.**

- **Al Qaeda In Iraq, More Than Any Other Group, Is Behind Most Of The Spectacular, High-Casualty Attacks Seen On TV.** Our military estimates that between 80 and 90 percent of suicide attacks in Iraq are carried out by foreign-born al Qaeda terrorists brought into the country for the sole purpose of blowing themselves up and killing innocent Iraq civilians.
- **Al Qaeda Designs Their Attacks To Accelerate Sectarian Violence In Iraq.** Al Qaeda attacks Shia in hopes of sparking reprisal attacks that inspire Sunnis to join al Qaeda's cause.
- **Al Qaeda Is The Only Terrorist Group In Iraq With Stated Ambitions To Make The Country A Base For Attacks *Outside* Iraq.** Al Qaeda in Iraq dispatched terrorists who bombed a wedding reception in Jordan and sent operatives to Jordan where they attempted a rocket attack on U.S Navy ships in the Red Sea.
- **Al Qaeda In Iraq Shares Bin Laden's Goal Of Making Iraq A Base For Its Radical Islamic Empire And Using It As A Safe Haven For Attacks On America.**
- **This Is Why Our Intelligence Community Reports That Al Qaeda In Iraq, Compared With Other Groups, "Stands Out For Its Extremism, Unmatched Operational Strength, Foreign Leadership, And Determination To Take The Jihad Beyond Iraq's Borders."**

### **Iraq Is Central To The War On Terror, And America Can Accept Nothing Less Than Complete Victory**

- **These Killers' Own Words Show That They Would Not Stop Trying To Kill Americans And Others Were We To Leave Iraq.**
  - We know their intentions. Just last November, al Qaeda's top commander in Iraq issued an audio statement saying he will not rest until he attacked our Nation's capital.
- **For The Security Of Our Citizens, And The Peace Of The World, We Must Give General Petraeus And His Troops The Time And Resources They Need To Defeat Al Qaeda In Iraq.** We have already seen how al Qaeda used a failed state in Afghanistan to bring death and destruction to the street of our cities. The costs of withdrawal could be catastrophic:
  - Sectarian violence in Iraq could increase dramatically, raising the prospect of mass casualties.
  - Fighting could engulf the entire region in chaos.
  - We could soon face a Middle East dominated by violent Islamic extremists.
- **Recent Successes In Anbar Province Show That This Is A Fight We Can Win.** Less than a

year ago, Anbar Province was al Qaeda's base in Iraq, but U.S. and Iraqi forces have since teamed with Sunni sheiks who have turned against al Qaeda and driven the terrorists from most of the population centers. Our troops are now working to replicate the success in Anbar in other parts of the country.

The facts are that al Qaeda terrorists killed Americans on 9/11, are fighting us in Iraq and across the world, and are plotting to kill Americans here at home again. Those who justify withdrawing our troops from Iraq by denying the threat of al Qaeda in Iraq and its ties to Osama bin Laden ignore the clear consequences of such a retreat. Following their advice would be dangerous for the world and disastrous for America. So we must defeat al Qaeda in Iraq—and we will.

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