

## In Focus

## More American Deployments For Iraq, Afghanistan

The Defense Department on Monday announced upcoming deployments of more than 42,000 troops, including 25,000 active duty US Army soldiers who would be sent to Iraq beginning in the fall to replace troops scheduled to come home by year's end.

The deployments would maintain a level of 15 brigades in Iraq, or roughly 140,000 troops—the number military leaders expect will remain on the warfront at the end of July, once the currently planned withdrawals are finished, AP said.

Under the new Pentagon policy effective in August, those active duty Army units will serve for 12 months, rather than the 15-month tours that units in Iraq now are serving.

The bulk of the soldiers deploying later this year re-



turned from Iraq late last year, and will have gotten about a year at home to rest and retrain.

As part of the announcement, the Pentagon alerted four National Guard Army brigades, or about 14,000 troops, to begin preparing for deployments to Iraq beginning early in 2009, and one National Guard Army brigade, with about 3,100 soldiers, to prepare to deploy to Afghanistan in the spring of 2010.

Members of the National Guard are citizen soldiers who train on weekends and for one month during the summer and can be called to active duty or mobilized for disasters if needed.

The Guard announcements, said Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman, are being made far in advance so that soldiers and their families can begin training and other preparations for their service.

Guard brigades heading to Iraq will provide security, while the brigade scheduled to go to Afghanistan in 2010 would train Afghan national forces.

Gen. David Petraeus, the top US commander in Iraq, has said the US will complete the withdrawal of the 20,000 troops that were sent to Iraq last year to tamp down the escalating violence in Baghdad. At the peak, there were 20 brigades with more than 170,000 US troops in Iraq.

Beyond that, he said he wants 45 days to evaluate the security conditions in Iraq, after which he will begin to decide whether more troops can be pulled out. The plan leaves open the possibility that the US could keep 15 brigades there through the end of the year—as voters go to the polls and elect a new president.

Currently there are 155,000 troops, including 17 combat brigades, in Iraq.

## Top Al-Qaeda Figure Arrested in Mosul

Iraqi officials said police on Monday arrested a man suspected of being the top leader of Al-Qaeda fighters in Mosul, who they said had fled the city in the face of an Iraqi security crackdown aimed at rooting out the terror network.

The US military said it was looking into the report, AP reported.

Reports of high-level Al-Qaeda arrests in the past have sometimes proven incorrect.

Maj. Gen. Ahmed Taha, of the Iraqi Interior Ministry, identified the detainee as Al-Qaeda in Iraq's Mosul wali (governor), which would make him the terror network's top figure in the city and the Ninevah province where it is located.

A security official involved in the detention said the suspect, Abdul-Khaliq Al-Sabawi, admitted in questioning to being the Mosul wali.

Al-Sabawi, a former brigadier in Saddam Hussein's military, fled Mosul before the crackdown was launched more than a week ago and took refuge in the city of Tikrit, 200 kilometers to the south, the official said.

In another incident, Eleven Iraqi soldiers were killed in an ambush Monday by unidentified attackers near the northern city of Mosul, where a major sweep against Al-Qaeda began last week, a local official told AFP.

## Sudan Fighting Resumes

Sudanese soldiers battled former southern rebels on Tuesday in the oil-rich region of Abyei despite a five-day old ceasefire, UN and southern officials said.

The United Nations has pulled most of its civilian staff from the town, which lies just north of the disputed boundary line between north and south Sudan, and remains contested despite a peace accord in 2005 that ended a 21-year civil war, AP reported.

Clashes erupted there last week between Sudan's Arab-dominated army and the Sudan People's Liberation Army, an ethnic African militia \_ making Abyei a flashpoint that could wreck the fragile peace. The civil war left an estimated 2 million people dead.

The UN says between 30,000 and 50,000 people have been displaced by the recent fighting. SPLA officials say the town's market and only bank were burned, and the town has been virtually deserted. The number of casualties are difficult to determine because of the continued violence. Sudanese troops resumed shelling Abyei on Tuesday, UN and southern officials said.

Army spokesman Brig. General Osman Al-Aghbash said SPLA

forces attacked an army camp with heavy weapons including tanks and rockets, "with the intention of taking over the town."

Al-Aghbash told the state-run Sudan News Agency that members of the army were killed in the attack, but did not give a number.

A UN official said a stray mortar round and small arms fire hit the group's compound in Abyei, but there were no casualties.

Sudan's 2005 peace agreement created a unity government led by President Omar al-Bashir and his one-time military rival, First Vice President Salva Kiir. It also set up a semiautonomous southern government led by Kiir, and called for national elections in 2009 and a referendum on independence for South Sudan in 2011.

The Sudanese People's Liberation Movement, which Kiir heads, has accused al-Bashir of breaching the 2005 accord by refusing to share oil wealth, failing to pull government troops out of South Sudan, and re-militarizing contested border zones such as Abyei.

Tension has occasionally flared in Abyei, which is claimed by the southerners, but the northern government is reluctant to let go because of its oil fields.

## US Criticized Over Israel Bias



From (l-r) Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Sultanov, Jordanian Foreign Minister Nader Dahabi, Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan and IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei attend a plenary session on the second day of the World Economic Forum on the Middle East.

Arabs criticized Bush on Monday, a day after he delivered a speech at the opening of the World Economic Forum on the Middle East in the Red Sea resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh.

Bush angered Arabs during his five-day tour of the region by delivering major speeches that were seen as being overly slanted toward Israel, AP reported.

Bush took a strikingly tougher tone with Arab nations during his address to them than he did with Israel in a speech on Thursday to the Knesset. Israel received effusive praise from the president while Arab nations heard a litany of US criticisms mixed with some compliments.

## &gt; US Turmoil in Mideast

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit responded Monday by saying US support for Israel and its own actions in the Middle East helped fuel turmoil and a clash of civilizations between Muslims and the West.

"When we see an Israeli tank in an Arab

city, a Palestinian city or an American tank in an Arab city firing arms, that makes people angry," said Aboul Gheit on the second day of the three-day summit, an offshoot of the annual gathering of political and business leaders in Davos, Switzerland.

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"The anger leads to lots of turmoil. Turmoil leads to instability," said Abul Gheit.

Bush lectured Arab nations Sunday on suppressing political opposition and religious freedom in the region.

About Gheit said Monday that the Palestin-

ian-Israeli conflict was not being addressed in Bush's second tour of the region.

"Would you please tell me did anyone raise the issue of the Israeli capability?" said Aboul Gheit on Monday to roaring applause.

The foreign minister added that the instability in the region also came from a lack of political determination to solve the region's problems, particularly the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

## &gt; Israeli Nukes

Experts have long maintained that Israel has nuclear weapons, although Israel refuses to confirm or deny it, in spite of the fact that the Zionist regime is holding more than 200 nuclear warheads.

In a much-anticipated speech Thursday to Israel's Parliament, Bush showered Israel with praise, strongly reiterated its right to defend itself and only gently urged leaders to achieve peace, without mention of concrete steps.

By contrast, he did not visit the Palestinian territories, nor mention the Palestinians' plight.