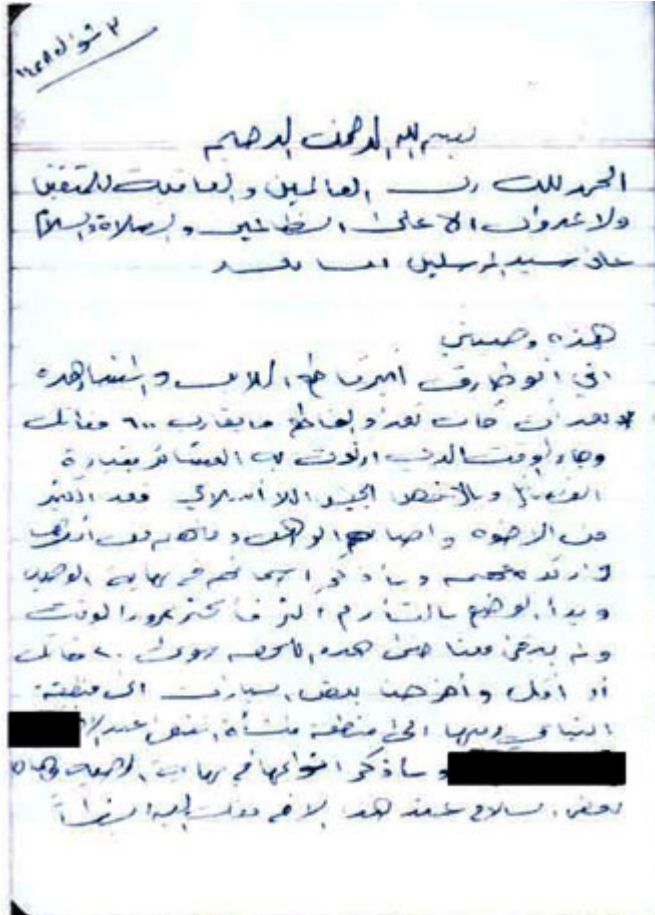


Al Qaida Leader's Diary Reveals Organization's Decline

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WASHINGTON — U.S. troops found a diary belonging to an al Qaida in Iraq leader that has Coalition forces believing the terrorist organization is “on its heels,” a senior military official in Baghdad said yesterday. Soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division’s 1st Brigade Combat Team captured a diary Nov. 3, 2007, belonging to Abu Tariq, an al Qaida emir in control of five battalions within two sectors, U.S. Air Force Col. Donald J. Bacon, a Multi-National Force - Iraq spokesman, told online journalists and “bloggers” during a conference call.

Diary PDF , Diary Translation

The Soldiers found the diary during a patrol conducted about 15 kilometers south of Balad. Bacon said the 16-page diary contains records about man power, operations, weapons, and finances, and it shows that al Qaida is hurting badly in the belts of Baghdad.

“There were 600 al-Qaida members in this sector, now there (are) 20 or less,” said Bacon.

In the diary, Tariq describes each battalion’s number decline and goes on to describe the 4th battalion as “scoundrels, sectarians and nonbelievers.” Tariq attributes his terrorist organization’s decline in large part to groups of Concerned Local Citizens (CLC), who are also known as the ‘Sons of Iraq’.

Many high-ranking al Qaida members, including Osama Bin Laden, have spoken out about the negative impact that the CLC groups have had on their organization. As a result, the CLC are being attacked more frequently by the terrorists, Bacon said.

Nevertheless, Bacon said the numbers of CLC are growing, which indicates that they are less afraid of al-Qaida.

“Right now there (are) approximately 77,500 CLC with 135 different initiatives, and more and more are being hired,” Bacon said.

Bacon said he believes the diary is also in part a will of sorts, in case anything was to happen to Tariq.

“He wanted to keep a clear record,” Bacon said.

Bacon said he believes the diary is indicative of some other areas in Iraq but not all of Iraq. He cautioned that al Qaida is still a dangerous enemy.

“We still believe they are our number one threat,” said Bacon.

“There is a 90 percent decline of violence in Anbar but we are still fighting them in Diala,” he added. “They still have the capacity and the will but we have the momentum.”

Bacon noted, however, that “overall levels of violence in Iraq are down, and we are seeing positive trends.”

(Story by Navy Seaman William Selby, Special to American Forces Press Service)