



AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE
NEWS ARTICLES

Coalition Disrupts Al Qaeda Networks in Iraq, Detains 27

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, March 17, 2008 – Coalition forces detained 27 suspected terrorists today during operations to disrupt al Qaeda networks operating in central and northern Iraq.

During an operation east of Sharqat, coalition forces captured an alleged weapons facilitator associated with the al Qaeda networks in northern Iraq. The suspect also is believed to be a close associate of the al Qaeda leader for the network in Abassi.

Additionally, the ground forces detained nine suspected terrorists and found 1,000 pounds of homemade explosive materials, which were safely destroyed on site along with three buildings believed to be used for terrorist activity.

In Baghdad, coalition forces detained two alleged al Qaeda leaders of the networks in Sulaymaniyah and Kirkuk. The suspects are believed to be involved in a car-bombing cell that operates in the region. Reports indicate the suspects are responsible for several recent attacks in Sulaymaniyah, including a car bomb that struck a hotel in the city March 10, resulting in an Iraqi civilian being killed and 29 others wounded.

Northeast of Taji, coalition forces captured an alleged associate of several members of the northern belt al Qaeda network, including a leader responsible for carrying out punishment for an illegal terrorist court system. Ground forces detained one suspect and destroyed a vehicle and bomb-making materials found on site.

During a series of operations northwest of Tarmiyah, coalition forces detained four suspected terrorists, including two wanted individuals allegedly associated with al Qaeda media and propaganda operations. The suspects also are believed to be connected to the al Qaeda media cell leader in Anbar province.

Further north, coalition forces conducted three coordinated operations in Mosul targeting associates of al Qaeda operating in the area. The ground forces detained nine suspected terrorists on site, including three wanted individuals with suspected connections to an al Qaeda senior leader.

Two of the suspects are believed to be involved in an al Qaeda-affiliated insurgent group in the region and the facilitation of suicide vests. Another allegedly is involved with a foreign terrorist leader in the city.

In operations in Iraq yesterday, coalition forces killed two terrorists and detained four alleged associates of a suicide bombing cell and al Qaeda network during operations north of Mansuriyah in central Iraq.

Intelligence reports led coalition forces to a location where the suspects were believed to be operating. The two men were armed and did not comply with directions or heed warnings. Coalition forces engaged the armed men, killing both. Secondary explosions were observed, indicating the individuals may have been wearing suicide vests. The assault force found multiple weapons and grenades, which were all safely destroyed to prevent further use by terrorists.

In other operations in the area yesterday, coalition forces captured an alleged foreign terrorist facilitator involved in the Diyala River Valley suicide bombing network near the Hamrin Mountains, northwest of Karwi. In addition to the wanted individual, the forces detained two suspects on site without incident and destroyed a vehicle to prevent further use for terrorist activity.

A senior al Qaeda leader also was detained yesterday. He is believed to be a direct associate of senior al Qaeda leaders in Baghdad as well as foreign-based terrorism facilitators. During continued efforts to degrade al Qaeda's car- and suicide-bomber networks in Baghdad, coalition forces captured a wanted individual believed to be a direct associate of senior al Qaeda leaders in the city and foreign-based facilitators.

Coalition forces discovered a large weapons cache in the Tahrir district of Baqouba on March 15. Soldiers from the 2nd Infantry Division's 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team discovered rocket-propelled grenade launchers on the roof of a home while on a routine patrol. The rooftop is connected to another home, where soldiers found a mortar tube, additional RPG rounds and numerous mortar rounds hidden in a barrel buried in the courtyard. The cache included mortar rounds, RPG rounds, RPG launchers, a mortar tube, an AK-47 assault rifle, and AK-47 magazines and rounds. The munitions were destroyed in a controlled detonation at a nearby joint combat outpost. The resident of the first house was detained.

In other news from Iraq, nearly 300 detainees were released from Camp Future on March 15. Release ceremonies are held once a month as a continuation of ongoing efforts by the Iraqi government and coalition forces working together to foster goodwill and reconciliation, officials said, adding that detainees are released only when they are deemed to no longer be an imperative threat to the security of Iraq or of Iraqi or coalition forces.

Saleh al-Mutlaq, head of the Dialogue Front Group of the Iraqi parliament, officiated at a release ceremony for detainees, providing a message of national reconciliation and rejuvenation.

“I see in your faces and your eyes how happy you are, but your country is happier to see you back to help build it and build a new democratic Iraq,” he said.

(Compiled from Multinational Force Iraq and Multinational Corps Iraq news releases.)