

# Iraqi army show of force in Basra

**An Iraqi commander has led a convoy through the stronghold of the radical Shia cleric Moqtada Sadr in Basra.**

Correspondents say the convoy was a show of force and that it met no significant resistance as it went through the Hayaniya district.

Hayaniya was the scene of heavy fighting last week between troops and fighters of Moqtada Sadr's Mehdi army.

Basra is reported to be mostly quiet for a third day running although there are some reports of sporadic violence.

## **Anti-militia offensive**

Hundreds of people were killed in several days of clashes last week when the Iraqi prime minister, Nouri Maliki, ordered an offensive against Shia militiamen in Basra.

The fighting ended when the cleric Moqtada Sadr ordered his fighters off the streets on Sunday.

Mr Maliki has described the operations in Basra as a success, but some observers say the offensive highlighted the Iraqi army's weakness, and may have reinforced Mr Sadr's support base.

Correspondents say Moqtada Sadr's supporters fear the prime minister - also a Shia - wishes to weaken their movement before local elections due later this year.