

## U.S. reports sharp drop in infiltrators to Iraq

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BAGHDAD &mdash; The U.S. military has reported the flow of Al Qaida volunteers to Iraq has declined by a factor of 5 during the past year.

The military said the flow of Sunni fighters recruited to join Al Qaida in Iraq has dropped to 20 per month. Officials said this contrasted with about 100 per month in late 2007.

"Entering Iraq is still easy, but getting caught is a greater danger than ever," an official said.

Officials said the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq's Anbar province has significantly enhanced security along the borders with Jordan and Syria. They said the U.S. military has recruited Sunni tribes to patrol the vast desert of Anbar, which comprised the main route for Sunni fighters for Al Qaida.

Over the last year, officials said, Iraq's neighbors have also enhanced border security. They cited Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria.

The U.S. military has also determined that Al Qaida no longer regarded Iraq as a priority. U.S. military commander in Iraq, Gen. David Petraeus, said Al Qaida was considering relocating most of its operatives to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

"We do think that there is some assessment ongoing as to the continued viability of Al Qaida's fight in Iraq," Petraeus, meant to take over U.S. Central Command in September 2008, told The Associated Press. "We do know the foreign fighter flow into Iraq has been reduced very substantially."

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