

U.S. Announces Troop Deployments to Iraq

Pentagon Announces That 57,000 U.S. Troops Have Been Told to Deploy to Iraq in Early 2007

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WASHINGTON - The Pentagon announced Friday that 57,000 U.S. troops, including five combat brigades, have been told to deploy to Iraq early next year a move that will maintain current force levels there.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld signed the deployment orders for about 20,000 soldiers from active duty Army brigades based in North Carolina, Georgia, Washington, Kansas and Italy. Another 10,000 reserves and 27,000 active duty troops are scheduled to go to Iraq in smaller units.

Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman also said that 1,500 soldiers in the South Carolina National Guard's 218th Brigade Combat Team have been told they will deploy to Afghanistan early next year.

The deployments, which will serve as replacements for troops leaving Iraq, will largely maintain the current force level of 141,000. The moves were initially described by military officials last week, but the specific units were announced Friday.

The units scheduled for deployment are the 3rd Infantry Division headquarters from Fort Stewart in Georgia; the 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division from Fort Riley in Kansas; the 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division from Fort Lewis in Washington; the 3rd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division from Fort Benning in Georgia; the 1st Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division from Fort Bragg in North Carolina; and the 173rd Airborne Brigade, based in Vicenza, Italy.

At least one of the five combat brigades the 4th brigade of the 1st Infantry Division is currently at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., undergoing intensive final training for their deployment to Iraq.

Whitman said the deployments reflect a continuing commitment to maintaining security in Iraq. In a written statement, the Pentagon said the "U.S. force rotations will be tailored based upon changes in the security situation. Iraqi security forces continue to develop capability and assume responsibility for security in Iraq."

The announcement comes as some Democrats, who are poised to take control of the House and Senate, continue to press for substantial reduction of U.S. troops in Iraq, and a timetable for that drawdown.

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