

# Guard troops aid search-and-rescue effort in Kansas

By Sgt. Sara Wood  
Army News Service

WASHINGTON — More than 300 members of the Kansas National Guard were activated in response to a powerful tornado that almost destroyed the town of Greensburg, Kan., May 4.

Guard members are assisting in search-and-rescue efforts in the wake of the tornado, which was classified as an F-5, the highest rating given by the National Weather Service.

The tornado wiped out much of the small town, knocking out power, water, natural gas and communications. To date, 10 deaths and more than 100 injuries have been reported.

The Kansas National Guard's 278th Sustainment Brigade has established a joint task force near the incident site. In addition to search-and-rescue efforts, the troops are working on power generation, logistical support, debris clearing, support to law enforcement, supporting

establishment of shelters and distribution of food and water.

Currently, the Kansas National Guard has 88 percent of its forces available, 60 percent of its Army Guard dual-use equipment on hand, and more than 85 percent of its Air Guard equipment on hand, said Randal Noller, public affairs officer for the National Guard Bureau. Under the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, a national partnership agreement that allows state-to-state assistance during governor or federally declared emergencies, Kansas has more than 400,000 Guardsmen available to it, he pointed out. However, Kansas has not yet requested assistance from other states.

The National Guard Bureau has offered liaison, operational, communications, contracting, search-and-rescue, public affairs and community relations support, and is prepared to support the governor in any way possible, Noller said.

The National Guard also has been activated in response to other severe weather in the Midwest. In South Dakota, 27 Guardsmen were activated in response to severe storms that moved through the region, destroying high voltage transmission lines and power poles and leaving several thousand customers without electricity. The Guard troops are transporting water pumps and generators and providing sandbags to prevent flooding.

In response to heavy rainfall Sunday night and Monday, the Iowa National Guard deployed 47 troops in support of local authorities to assist in sandbagging operations in the city of Red Oak, Iowa. Iowa National Guard troops worked with civilian first responders moving sand, filling sand bags and building temporary dams to mitigate the effects of the rising waters.

Sgt. Sara Wood writes for the American Forces Press Service.



Photo courtesy of U.S. Air Force

Damage in Greensburg, Kan., is extensive after an F5 tornado struck on May 4. More than 300 members of the Kansas National Guard have been activated in response.



Sgt. Thomas L. Day

A 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division Stryker vehicle test fires at the Udairi ranges in Kuwait prior to the unit moving into Iraq.

# Stryker unit prepares to join surge effort

By Joseph Giordano  
Stars and Stripes

A fourth Army brigade has arrived in and around Baghdad to complement the American troop "surge," officials said Wednesday.

The 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, "will be deployed in various locations around the country.

Their mission will be to assist Iraqi Security Forces to clear, control and retain key areas of the capital city in

order to reduce violence," a military news release read.

The brigade is made up of around 3,700 Soldiers, officials said.

Even as President Bush and the Congress continue wrangling over war funding and the "surge" policy of putting nearly 30,000 additional American troops in Iraq, the buildup in Baghdad has continued.

Three other brigades — the 3rd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division; 2nd Brigade, 82nd Airborne; and 4th Brigade,

1st Infantry Division — have arrived in Baghdad over the previous three months.

In all, five Army brigades have been tapped to make up the bulk of additional forces. Originally announced as 17,500 troops, the "surge" also includes thousands of extra logistical and military police personnel.

The new security plan involves putting Iraqi and American troops in smaller combat outposts within the city. The aim is to provide around-the-clock troop

presence in neighborhoods that had limited oversight before.

The 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team was formed in June 2006. According to a separate military release issued Wednesday, the brigade will be making the combat debut of the mobile gun system variant of the Stryker.

The improved Strykers have a new 105 mm cannon, a mounted M240C machine gun and a pedestal-mounted M2 .50-caliber machine gun, officials said.

Digital targeting takes into account

wind, the cant of the vehicle and the barometric pressure, officials said.

The new systems were test-fired at Udairi Range in Kuwait before the unit moved north into Iraq.

"If I was looking down this barrel, I'd consider it a deterrent," Sgt. 1st Class John Abronski of the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, was quoted as saying.

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# 10 brigades to deploy beginning in August

By Donna Miles  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — Defense Department officials Tuesday announced the next 10 Army brigade combat teams to deploy to Iraq to replace units currently operating there.

The announcement affects about 35,000 active-duty troops, who all will deploy between August and the year's end to serve as replacement forces for those returning home,

Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman told reporters.

The units will deploy for up to 15 months. Whitman emphasized that the announcement is unrelated to the troop surge under way to increase security in and around Baghdad.

"Let me be real clear about this," he said.

"This deployment ... is not a decision with respect to the surge. It is simply identifying the next 10 units that will receive deployment orders and to provide the

kind of predictability" they need to prepare.

Any decision regarding the surge will be based "entirely upon the conditions on the ground," Whitman said.

Army Gen. David Petraeus, commander of Multinational Force Iraq, is expected to assess those conditions later this year and make recommendations regarding the surge to the commander of U.S. Central Command, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, defense secretary and president, Whitman said.

## Deployment orders

Major Army units receiving deployment orders include:

- 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, Fort Hood, Texas
- 1st, 2nd and 3rd Brigades, 101st Airborne Division, Fort Campbell, Ky.
- 4th Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, Fort Polk, La.
- 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Hood
- 4th Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, Ga.
- 2nd Brigade (Stryker), 25th Infantry Division, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii
- 2nd Cavalry Regiment (Stryker), Vilseck, Germany
- 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division, Baumholder, Germany

# Coalition operations claim life of al Qaeda in Iraq's chief propagandist

By John D. Banusiewicz  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — Coalition forces have been targeting al Qaeda in Iraq over the last six days in a series of raids dubbed "Operation Rat Trap," a senior spokesman told reporters in Baghdad May 4.

Army Maj. Gen. William Caldwell said coalition forces had no information that would substantiate the rumored — and widely reported — deaths of terrorist leaders Abu Ayyub al-Masri or Abu Omar al-Baghdadi. In fact, the general added, coalition officials don't know who Baghdadi is.

However, Caldwell said, coalition forces killed Muharib Abdul Latif, al Qaeda in Iraq's chief propagandist, at about 2 a.m. May 1. After coalition forces confirmed Latif's identity, they

released the body to a member of his tribe for proper burial.

A subsequent encounter at an Iraqi security checkpoint may have led to reports that Baghdadi had been killed, Caldwell said.

Latif was a close associate of Masri, the leader of al Qaeda in Iraq, Caldwell said, and he was involved in numerous high-profile kidnappings, including those of journalist Jill Carroll and missionary Tom Fox.

"Based on multiple detainee debriefings, we know that he was responsible for the transportation and movement of Jill Carroll from her various hiding places (and that) he was responsible for the propaganda and ransom videos from the Jill Carroll kidnapping," said Caldwell.

In addition, Latif was the last one known to have had personal custody of

Fox before his death, Caldwell said.

"We also know he was involved in the kidnapping of two Germans in January of 2006," Caldwell continued. "Between May and September of 2006, we know he was working as a money and foreign facilitator for al Qaeda in Iraq in Syria."

Latif then made his way back into Iraq and took over as the minister of information for al Qaeda, Caldwell said.

While coalition officials are aware of reports that Masri was killed and that his body was turned over to coalition forces, the general said, they have no evidence to that effect.

"I know there's been a couple announcements that somebody did kill Ayyub al-Masri," he said. "We do not have nor do we know anybody that has in their possession right now either a

person alive or dead that we can do DNA analysis or photo identification on at this point. We just don't have any information or knowledge of that. I am aware, though, of the claims that have been made. I've read them in the press reporting. But we cannot do any independent confirmation of that ourselves as of this point."

Regarding Baghdadi, the general told reporters that coalition officials not only have no evidence that Baghdadi is dead, but also don't even know whether he exists. "We're not really sure who that is," he said. "There's a lot of discussion about a person called al-Baghdadi, but we actually have no knowledge who that might be."

Coalition forces will continue to target al Qaeda in Iraq, Caldwell said.

"Al Qaeda continues to use indiscriminate targeting against civil-

ians," he said. "We've said during the month of April somewhere between 1,500 to 2,000 innocent Iraqi civilians were either killed or injured through the use of car bombs and suicide vests, so this is an important operation to take on."

In Iraq's Anbar province, Caldwell said, terrorists no longer are welcome.

"From the efforts by the local tribe leaders taking on al Qaeda and saying that their tactics, their methods, the means by which they intimidate people, the indiscriminate killings against innocent civilians, their use of chlorine car bombs that they do use — it's just something they're not going to tolerate any more," Caldwell said. "That's a decision they've made, and they are not allowing al Qaeda to operate freely as they once did out in that area."