

# Surge progress may lead to troop reductions in northern Iraq, general says

by John J. Kruzel  
American Forces Press Service

BAGHDAD — Now at full strength, the U.S. troop surge in Iraq is showing “definitive progress” and the number of forces serving in Iraq’s Multi-National Division-North could be halved by summer 2009, U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Benjamin R. Mixon said.

A reduction of U.S. forces under the general’s command could begin as early as January 2008, he told Pentagon reporters via videoconference.



U.S. Marine Corps Pfc. Christopher Kluser, machine gunner with Battalion Landing Team 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, stays alert while on the up gun in the turret located in a 7-ton truck in Al Anbar Province, Iraq, July 9, 2007. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Timothy M. Stewman.

Mixon, commander of both Multi-National Division-North and the U.S. Army’s 25th Infantry Division, is responsible for six Iraqi provinces in northern Iraq, including the city of Baqubah -- site of the ongoing Operation Arrowhead Ripper.

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## Operation Diablo Dragnet links Government to people

By Army Sgt. Tony J. Spain  
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - Paratroopers with 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, conducted air assault missions as part of Operation Diablo-Dragnet the end of June.

The operation involved three different units and the help of an Islamic Republic of Afghanistan official disrupting Taliban operations around the Maiwand District located on the Helmand and Kandahar province borders.

Mohammad Zarif, a member of the National Security Directorate for the Maiwand District, served as the eyes for the governor of Helmand province and reported directly to him about the situation in the area. His presence also helped international security assistance forces bring a familiar face to local Afghans.

“We prefer to have IRoA involvement in all of our operations, especially when we have such close and constant interaction with the local populace as we did during Operation Diablo Dragnet,” said Army Capt. Don L. Cantera, Company B, 1/508th PIR commander. “Fortunately, we had the assistance of the National Security Directorate to facilitate our search.”

Operations ran smoothly for the paratroopers as they moved through the small farming villages of De Kalakhan



Paratroopers from 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, return from a patrol in the Maywand District on the border of Kandahar and Heldman provinces in Afghanistan June 29. Photo by Spc. Matthew Littell.

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CSTC-A Change of Command, CENTCOM’s Deputy Director of Operations talks about terrorist groups in Iraq, some troops get to take a free vacation.

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### EXPOSING THE ENEMY

#### AL QAEDA KEY DISRUPTER IN IRAQ, AMBASSADOR SAYS

Al Qaeda bombings and other acts of violence conducted across Iraq are designed to incite sectarian strife and create enough chaos and instability to bring down the country’s central government, the U.S. ambassador to Iraq told a panel of U.S. legislators here today.

“I have seen attacks from al Qaeda that have been aimed at virtually every community in Iraq,”

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### WARFIGHTER STORIES

#### ARMY RESERVIST RECEIVES BRONZE STAR FOR WORK WITH KURDISH SOLDIERS

One of the most vital missions of the U.S. forces in Iraq is to train and support the Iraqi security forces so that they can defend their own country. Matson was sent to Mosul in April 2006 to work with Iraqi soldiers, most of whom were former “peshmerga,” indigenous Kurdish guerilla fighters. He was part of a specialized task force of ten U.S. soldiers, each with a unique skill set. These training groups, also known as Military Transition Teams (MITTs), are located throughout Iraq. In Mosul alone, there were 10-15 MITTs while Matson was there.

Matson served as the operations officer for his team. He knew he needed to develop personal relationships with the Iraqi forces

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