

Gates envisions stable, safe Iraq

by UPI

MOSUL, Iraq -- A stable Iraq is nearing, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates told reporters in Mosul Wednesday, but patience will be required in achieving stability. "A secure, stable and democratic Iraq is within reach," Gates said after a meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki in the northern Iraqi city. "We must be patient" and be resolved in this goal "so all Iraqis can enjoy peace and prosperity." As Gates spoke of a peaceful Iraq, car bombings around the country killed at least nine Iraqis, including one in Mosul, it was reported. Elsewhere, a car bomb killed five people and wounded 12 others in Baquba, north of Baghdad, said Dr. Omar al-Dulaimi of Baquba hospital. Another car bombing in Kirkuk killed four Iraqis and injured 10 others, reported KUNA, the Kuwait News Agency. Gates, who arrived unannounced to inspect U.S. troops and meet with Iraqi officials, told a news conference he and Maliki discussed "a range of issues affecting the future of Iraq," including the downturn in sectarian violence. With the decline in violence, "there's been a substantial increase in refugees returning home," he said. "International investment is on the rise and 70,000 Iraqis are defending their neighborhoods."

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