

U.S.-led air raid targets Iraqi militants

by UPI

BAGHDAD -- The U.S. military said its aircraft dropped 40,000 pounds of bombs on insurgent strongholds in the Arab Jabour district in southern Baghdad. U.S. officials said it conducted its largest air raid in months targeting al-Qaida and its affiliates operating in Iraq as part of a renewed effort against militant activity, The New York Times said Thursday. Nine U.S. soldiers died in Sunni-dominated regions north of Baghdad as part of the broader push against insurgents operating in Diyala province. Military officials said the soldiers encountered booby traps but few insurgents, leading to some speculation that militants were tipped off to the impending operations, the Times said. Local residents reported gunmen operating freely in several areas, but said many left following an increase in helicopter traffic signaling a possible U.S.-led raid. Militants left leaflets and other propaganda warning Iraqis against cooperating with U.S. and Iraqi efforts to drive out the insurgents.

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