

Al-Qaida in Iraq working on its image

by UPI

MOSUL, Iraq -- The U.S. military says al-Qaida militants in Iraq are working at improving their image among civilians, USA Today reported Thursday. In the northern city of Mosul, intelligence officer Capt. Pat Ryan told the newspaper intelligence intercepts showed the group was being instructed to issue warnings before bombings, stage fewer attacks against police and downplay the strictest interpretation of Islamic law. He said there are as many as 30 attacks a day against U.S. and Iraqi forces in the city, which is regarded as al-Qaida's last urban stronghold in the country. Last month, a child was hit by a stray bullet. Ryan said the military learned senior al-Qaida members were angered. "The leadership was unhappy that it had gone that far that they had wounded the locals," Ryan said. "The (intelligence) traffic said, 'Take it back a notch. We need to make sure that the locals aren't getting too upset with us.'"

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