

Ahmadinejad touts Iran-Iraq ties

by UPI

BAGHDAD - Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad used his historic visit to Iraq Sunday to highlight ties between the two nations. Ahmadinejad's two-day visit to Iraq, the first by an Iranian leader since the eight-year war in the 1980s between Iran and Iraq, began in Baghdad with his Iraqi counterpart, Jalal Talabani. "Our countries have the same viewpoint on the resolution of international and regional problems," Ahmadinejad said at a joint news conference with the Iraqi president, RIA Novosti reported. "The enemies of our governments have never wanted Iran and Iraq to be united, to strengthen one another. The two parties are, however, determined to intensify their political, economic and cultural co-operation," he said. U.S. officials in Baghdad were not expected to participate in the meeting and some analysts said they saw the visit as putting Iraq in the middle of the bitter relationship between the west and the Islamic Republic, the BBC said. Ahmadinejad said discussions would focus on bilateral trade relations, energy cooperation and linking transportation routes between the two countries, Tehran's Alalam news network said Sunday. "This visit is aimed at reinforcing the peace and security of the two peoples and of all the region. The visit is in the interests of everyone," Ahmadinejad said.

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