

British officer denies snub in Basra

by UPI

BAGHDAD -- British troops had a "significant" role in the Basra military operation, despite claims Iraqi forces sought U.S. assistance first, a British commander said. Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki began the offensive against militias in Basra where British forces are based. However, Baghdad reportedly first turned to the United States for support and a British officer was ordered out of a meeting between Maliki and an American general, KUNA, the Kuwaiti news agency, reported Friday. Deputy Chief of Defense Staff Lt. Gen Peter Wall said the "hastily planned" operation had "considerable effects." British troops provided "more than 80 percent of the force" that worked to support Iraqi forces in Basra initiative, Wall said. "We played a significant role in this operation, entirely in accordance with the Multinational Force plan, which is of course tailored to an Iraqi lead," he said. In Sadr City, where clashes between Iraqi and U.S. forces and militias intensified recently, U.S. commanders are shifting more military responsibility to the Iraqi troops, The New York Times reported. U.S. forces have shown their Iraqi counterparts, for example, how to hold a forward line. "The (Iraqi Army) needs to start doing it on their own," 2nd Lt. Adam Bowen, said.

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