

WSJ editorial sees Maliki success

by UPI

BAGHDAD -- Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's strategy to take on Shiite militias in Basra and Sadr City was a political and military success, an editorial claims. Most analysts initially saw the Iraqi-led offensive in Basra as a huge risk for the U.S.-backed Maliki government. But two months after operations in the southern port city, Iraqi forces persevered by arresting scores of fighters loyal to influential Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr and uncovering several weapons caches, The Wall Street Journal said Wednesday in an editorial. The Iraqi government, the Journal said, brokered a 14-point truce with Sadr loyalists during the weekend with the assistance of Iranian officials. The deal mandates Sadr's fighters, the Mehdi Army, lay down their weapons, stop all militant activity and recognize the Iraqi government as the sole authority of law. The Journal editorial says the Iranian support for the truce means the Maliki government has emerged as a geopolitical force. If Sadr's forces weren't on the verge of collapse as Maliki gains influence, the Journal reasons, Tehran would have "little reason to suddenly" support the truce. The truce with Sadr supports the strategic reasoning behind the U.S. troop surge that the Iraqi government would gain confidence to emerge from the post-Saddam era once Baghdad became "convinced that the U.S. was not going to cut and run," the editorial stated.

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