

Iranian diplomat freed in Iraq

by UPI

BAGHDAD - An Iranian diplomat kidnapped in Iraq has been freed in Baghdad. The BBC reported that no one has admitted abducting Jalal Sharafi, the second secretary at the Iranian Embassy in Baghdad who was seized from his car in February by men wearing Iraqi Army uniforms. The Iraqi government had been working for Sharafi's release. Iraqi officials told the BBC that Iraq is seeking the release of five Iranians being held by U.S. forces and is seeking the release of 15 British Navy sailors and Royal Marines seized by Iran in the Persian Gulf. "We are intensively seeking the release of the five Iranians," an unnamed Iraqi official told the BBC. "This will be a factor that will help in the release of the British sailors and Marines." Iran has blamed the United States for Sharafi's abduction, but U.S. officials have said they knew nothing about the kidnapping or the release. The United States has refused to release the five Iranians captured in Irbil in northern Iraq in January, saying the men were aiding insurgents and not doing consular work as both the Iranian and Iraqi governments have said. Sharafi was freed on Monday and returned to Iran on Tuesday.

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