

U.S. deaths in Iraq reach year's high

by UPI

BAGHDAD - May has become the deadliest month for U.S. troops in Iraq this year, with 117 fatalities reported, the highest monthly toll since 2004.

The most violent area used to be Anbar province in the west but Diyala province, northeast of Baghdad, has taken the lead, a Los Angeles Times correspondent reported Wednesday.

The shift was somewhat predictable, U.S. Army Lt. Col. Christopher Garver, a U.S. military spokesman, said. He said part of the rise in fatalities was the February build up of troops in Baghdad and the fact the military doubled the number of troops in Diyala to 6,000 this year.

"We knew that one of the outcomes of the increased pressure in Baghdad was you press them in the center, they ooze out the sides," Garver told the Times. "There is also pressure being put on al-Qaida in Al Anbar as well, so we are seeing Diyala become the new hotspot."

The U.S. troop death toll in Anbar has dropped significantly this year, as U.S. commanders say tribes dropped allegiance to al-Qaida and cooperated with U.S. forces, the report said.

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