

## British deaths climb in Iraq

by UPI

BASRA, Iraq -- A roadside bomb has killed two British soldiers bringing the number of British military personnel killed in Iraq to 168. The victims, both members of the Irish Guards, died when their convoy was hit by a roadside bomb near the oilfields west of Basra, Britain's Independent reported Friday. Two other guardsmen were seriously wounded in the Thursday attack. In the past four months, the British air base on the outskirts of Basra has been hit by mortar and rocket fire more than 600 times. Losses have been increasing as the British prepare to abandon their base in Basra city and move to the frequently-attacked air base on the outskirts. British forces have already withdrawn from three of the four provinces in southern Iraq, turning responsibility for security over to the Iraqi government. The Independent says British officials have privately been echoing American claims that the Shia militias in Basra and the rest of Iraq are being manipulated and supplied by Iran.

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