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### U.S. ARMY EUROPE-LED TASK FORCE IRON BEGINS OFFENSIVE TO DRIVE AL QAEDA FROM NORTHERN IRAQ

#### Multi-National Division – North release

**TIKRIT, Iraq** -- Task Force Iron, led by U.S. Army Europe's 1st Armored Division, launched a major offensive called Operation Iron Hammer across four provinces in northern Iraq Nov. 5.

The operation, involving three brigade combat teams and three Iraqi Army divisions, is designed to exploit previous successes against al Qaeda and set the conditions for continued reconciliation efforts in key northern provinces.

“This operation is a relentless pursuit of al Qaeda, who we have been attempting to move into new areas and disrupt the security of the local populace,” said Brig. Gen. Jim Boozer, 1st Armored Division's assistant division commander for maneuver, and one of the deputy commanders of Task Force Iron. “Our intent is to continue to pressure this group, disrupt their operations and deny them safe havens in the region. We want to ensure the citizens of Iraq have the opportunity to step up and continue to secure their neighborhoods and get their cities back to normal.”

Without al Qaeda's criminal activities and intimidation, Iraqi businesses have begun to expand and contribute to Iraq's economy. Sheiks and local government leaders have also used increased security in other areas to step forward and provide the necessary leadership to citizens in the region.

“Our unit has made great headway and success in conducting these operations in the past,” said Lt. Col. Keitron Todd, commander of the task force's 1st Squadron, 9<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. “Together, our work with a determined Iraqi Army and Iraqi police has helped in building better relationships with the Iraqi people. This further reinforces a growing confidence in the government of Iraq and an understanding of the Iraqi people that a strengthened ISF will bring security to the public.”

Historically, these large “named” operations provide benefits to the Iraq's reconciliation efforts as Iraqis establish national solidarity.

“These types of large offensive operations against extremists who are damaging Iraq have led to monumental effects,” said Maj. Gen. Mark Hertling, the commander of 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division and Task Force Iron. “As we achieve additional successes against the terrorists and insurgents during the period of the operation, we’ll start assisting the sheiks and the governmental leaders in rebuilding their cities in the areas where we have focused.”

“Our brigade will launch Operation Warrior Hammer in support of Operation Iron Hammer to demonstrate our resolve to insure that al Qaeda has no safe harbor in Kirkuk Province,” said Col. Dave Paschal, commander of the task force's 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division. “Like the other brigades and Iraqi divisions involved in this operation, our intent is to provide increased security for Iraqis and loosen the hold of al Qaeda. We’re already seeing the good citizens in our area happy about what we’re doing. They’re tired of the continued random violence and the lack of positive political message that is associated with al Qaeda.”



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