



THE WHITE HOUSE
PRESIDENT
GEORGE W. BUSH



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Fact Sheet: Helping Iraq Achieve Economic and Political Stabilization

President Bush Meets With Provincial Reconstruction Team Leaders From Across Iraq, Discusses PRT Efforts To Provide Economic And Reconstruction Assistance To Local And Provincial Governments

[!\[\]\(003082e50e3009141f59bd5df831749f_img.jpg\) President Bush Participates in Video Teleconference with Iraq Provincial Reconstruction Team Leaders and Brigade Combat Commanders](#)

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Today, President Bush received an update from Iraq Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) leaders and Brigade Combat Team (BCT) Commanders on the important progress they are making in local communities around Iraq. The President was joined by Vice President Cheney, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Joint Chiefs Chairman Admiral Mike Mullen, Ambassador Ryan Crocker, and Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England to talk to representatives from PRTs and BCTs in Baghdad, Kirkuk, Najaf, Karbala, Diwaniyah, Ramadi, and Diyala provinces. These men and women briefed the President on the changes that they are seeing firsthand on the ground in Iraq. PRTs are a key element of the new strategy for Iraq announced by the President a year ago. They are made up of hundreds of diverse personnel – including members from the State Department, USAID, the Departments of Justice and Agriculture, Coalition forces, and others. They are working to secure military gains by helping Iraq achieve necessary economic and political stabilization.

- **Participants in today's meeting taking part from Iraq via video teleconference included:**
 - Howard L. Keegan, Team Leader, Kirkuk Provincial Reconstruction Team
 - Colonel David Paschal, Commander, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division
 - Ambassador John E. Bennett, Team Leader, Baghdad Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team 6
 - Colonel William B. Hickman, Commander, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division
 - Angus T. Simmons, Team Leader, PRTs Najaf, Karbala, and Diwaniyah, Regional Embassy Office Al Hillah
 - Lieutenant Colonel Richard E. Cleveland, Deputy Team Leader, Najaf and Diwaniyah Provincial Reconstruction Teams

- **In addition, recently returned PRT leaders from Ramadi, Diyala, and Baghdad joined the discussion with President Bush at the White House.** These leaders included:
 - Kristin Hagerstrom, Team Leader, Ramadi Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team
 - Dr. John Jones, Team Leader, Diyala Provincial Reconstruction Team
 - John Smith, Team Leader, Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team, Baghdad 7

PRTs Are A Key Element Of The President's "New Way Forward" Strategy

The new strategy President Bush announced a year ago was built around three key elements, ending with a surge of PRTs. The strategy called for:

1. **A surge of additional troops into Iraq:** These troops were sent to Iraq with a new mission to protect the Iraqi people from terrorists, insurgents, and illegal militias.
2. **A surge of operations:** This surge began in July once additional troops were in place, with new offensives across the country to drive terrorists and militias out of their strongholds.
3. **A surge of PRTs:** PRTs are ensuring that military progress is quickly followed up with real improvements in the daily lives of Iraqis.

Over the past year, we have doubled the number of PRTs in Iraq – there are now 24 of these teams active in all 18 Iraqi provinces. Many of these teams are "embedded" PRTs, created as part of the President's new strategy. These civilian-led teams work together with BCTs or Marine regiments to support the military surge in Anbar Province and the greater Baghdad area.

As security improves, PRTs have an increasing role to play working with local Iraqi governments to improve basic services and economic opportunities. Violence across Iraq continues to decrease, and tens of thousands of Iraqis have stepped forward to join Concerned Local Citizens groups that are fighting al Qaeda and other extremists. Life is returning to normal in communities across Iraq – and PRTs are working to help facilitate this transition and maintain progress by assisting provincial and local governments in delivering essential needs like schools, roads, and sewage and water services, with a focus on building local and regional capacity to provide government services.

PRTs play a vital role in sustaining the bottom-up political progress that is laying the groundwork for national reconciliation in Iraq. For example, the Kirkuk PRT last year helped broker a settlement that brought Sunnis back into the Province's local government – the Provincial Council.

PRTs Are Making Significant Gains Working With The Iraqi People To Achieve Political And Economic Progress

For example, in 2007, achievements by embedded PRTs (ePRTs) established after the

beginning of the troop surge include:

- **The opening of the Fallujah Business Development Center in Anbar with funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Community Stabilization Program (CSP).** With help from the PRT, the local Chamber of Commerce and CSP staff ended 2007 reviewing grant applications for 400 local small businesses.
- **A regional security summit in Taji sponsored by an ePRT located in Baghdad and facilitated by a Brigade from the 1st Cavalry Division.** One hundred sheikhs from the Taji area met to discuss cooperating on security issues with strong participation by the Iraqi military and police and Coalition Forces. The Taji area is critical for security in the north of Baghdad and is strategically positioned where the provinces of Baghdad, Anbar, Salah ad Din, and Diyala join.
- **The opening of an agricultural bank in Ramadi by an ePRT located in Anbar Province.** The Agricultural Bank of Ramadi closed in 2004, when terrorists occupied it. By the end of 2007, the facility was completely renovated and ready to support local agriculture. This is critical to the province, which depends highly on agriculture for jobs and prosperity.

PRTs Led By Today's Video Teleconference Participants Have Seen Significant Success In Fostering The Political And Economic Progress Necessary To Stability In Iraq

1. Kirkuk Provincial Reconstruction Team

The Kirkuk PRT partners with the 1st Brigade Combat Team (BCT), 10th Mountain Division, and has worked to improve the province in several key ways. For example, the team established the Provincial Reconstruction Development Committee process, which now serves as a model for all other Iraqi provinces. As a result of this process, the Provincial Government was able to successfully execute its budget for the last two fiscal years.

- **Other examples of efforts by the Kirkuk PRT to strengthen local institutions and encourage economic development in the province include:**
 - **Initiating a Major Crimes Court in Kirkuk, a major step forward in providing full judicial services to the province.**
 - **Assisting thousands of local enterprises with small business loans.** This has become one of the most successful micro-finance operations in Iraq, disbursing over \$900,000 in loans.
 - **Instituting a solid waste management program.** This program is expected to employ 600 Iraqis upon completion.
 - **Starting a campaign to create "green spaces," with the goal of providing all citizens with a park within reasonable proximity to their homes.**

2. Baghdad Provincial Reconstruction Team 6

Baghdad Embedded PRT 6 is one of eight PRTs embedded with a Brigade Combat Team in Baghdad Province. It is a 14 person team covering the Baghdad Districts of Mansour, Kadhimiya, and Karkh. The team includes four Foreign Service officers, two Army officers, three DOD civilians, and five contractors.

- **Taking advantage of improvements in the area's security, PRT Baghdad 6 has been able to:**
 - Mentor and develop District Councils and Departments of Public Works in several neighborhoods;
 - Provide micro-grants to small businesses, enabling them to reopen by restocking inventory, restoring business equipment, repairing damaged shops, and hiring employees;
 - Provide funding for generators powering markets residential areas; and
 - Develop Public Works Substations to house equipment and personnel at a number of Joint Security Substations run by Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces.

3. Provincial Reconstruction Teams Najaf, Karbala, And Diwaniyah

The Najaf, Karbala, and Diwaniyah PRTs are headed by a single team leader and based out of the Regional Embassy Office in Al-Hillah. While last year's security conditions forced these PRTs to have limited engagements with Najaf, Karbala, and Diwaniyah provinces, improved security has recently allowed the PRTs to travel to these three provinces and concentrate on rebuilding efforts:

- **The Najaf PRT is helping upgrade a local university so that it can support the education and developmental needs of the region.**
- **Next month, the PRTs will begin implementing a USAID project in all three provinces to renovate the Provincial Council Offices.**
- **PRT leaders in Najaf – one of Shia Islam's holiest cities – are working with Iraqis to design and construct a modern airport.** This will allow Shia Muslims from around the world to fly to their holiest city on pilgrimage for the first time, as well as support tourism and economic development in the province. Najaf already receives near 2,500 tourists a day, and the PRT is working with a Provincial Council Tourism Committee to support the industry in the province.

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