

## Bremer: Iraqi security forces ready to face insurgents alone

By Lee Keath  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Iraqi security forces will not be ready to protect the country against insurgents by the June 30 handover of power, the top U.S. administrator said Sunday — an assessment aimed at defending the continued heavy presence of U.S. troops here even after an Iraqi government takes over.

The unusually blunt comments from L. Paul Bremer came amid a weekend of new fighting that pushed the death toll for U.S. troops in April to 99, already the record for a single month in Iraq and approaching the number killed during the invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein last year.

The military had always planned to remain after June 30, when the U.S. is to handover sovereignty to Iraq. In recent months coalition officials acknowledged the transfer of security will be significantly slower than hoped because Iraqi forces were not prepared.

But Bremer said the fighting across the country this month exposed the depth of the problems inside the security forces.

"Events of the past two weeks show that Iraq still faces security threats and needs outside help to deal with them. Early this month, the foes of democracy overran Iraqi police stations and seized public buildings in several parts of the coun-

### U.S. troop deaths climb over weekend

Five U.S. Marines died in an ambush on the Syrian border on Sunday. A day before, three U.S. soldiers were killed in Diwaniyah. Another died when a roadside bomb exploded in Baghdad and a Marine was killed in separate fighting in western Iraq.



try," he said. "Iraqi forces were unable to stop them."

"It is clear that Iraqi forces will not be able, on their own, to deal with these threats by June 30 when an Iraqi government assumes sovereignty," Bremer said in a statement issued by the U.S. coalition.

With U.S.-led forces fighting on two fronts and insurgent violence flaring elsewhere, at least 99 U.S. troops have been killed in combat since April 1. In the latest violence, five Marines and five soldiers were killed Saturday.

A total of 115 U.S. servicemembers were killed in combat

from the start of the U.S. invasion in March 2003. On May 1, when President Bush declared major combat operations over, the single-day record for U.S. troops was 82, in November. In 700 U.S. servicemembers were killed in Iraq.

Over the weekend, at least 100 Iraqis were killed, bringing the Iraqi death toll in April to more than 1,050.

Also Sunday, Spain's minister ordered the withdrawal of Spanish troops from Iraq as soon as possible, fulfilling a campaign promise made after terrorist bombings that U.S. militants said were responsible for the withdrawal of Spain's support of the war.

Iraq's defense minister, Allawi, a Shiite Muslim appointed by U.S. officials last week, announced the withdrawal of key U.S. troops from Iraq, establishing representatives of the country's diverse communities in the defense positions.

The army's top general, Gen. Babakir Zuberi, commanded Kurdish militia in the north for decades and fought alongside coalition troops during last year's invasion. The chief of staff, Amer al-Hashimi, a Sunni former general in the Iraqi army until he retired in 1999, is also in Iraq.

U.S. officials have been rebuilding the military from scratch, arranging the training of recruits and naming its civilian head.

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## Report: Dallas at tipping point

DALLAS (AP) — Surging crime, weak schools, job loss and civic leaders who seem not to notice the compounding problems have plunged "the city that works" into a crisis that can only be reversed by bold shifts in strategy, structure and services, according to a report by The Dallas Morning News published Sunday.

Dallas — lulled by past successes, cushioned by North Texas' robust growth, blinded by a lack of self-examination and hobbled by a legacy of racism and neglect — is at a tipping point, where wrong moves could precipitate decline, the News concluded, based on a far-reaching statistical comparison of Dallas and 14 other large U.S. cities by Booz Allen Hamilton.

"Dallas does not see itself as a city in crisis ... But the data indicate that Dallas is a city in crisis," the firm concluded.

The Booz Allen study, commissioned by the News, used dozens of measures — from life expectancy to library visits — to produce a comprehensive picture of each city's performance.

Among the 14 peer cities, only three have worse violent crime rates, only four have lower student SAT scores, and none saw less economic expansion in the 1990s.

By those three measures — which are Dallas residents' top concerns — Dallas ranks No. 12 among the 15 cities.

The study showed that crime and troubled schools have driven families to Dallas' suburbs, leading employers to follow, causing the city's tax base and budget to shrink.

Some city leaders denied the study's conclusions while others fell back on habitual remedies.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### 'Baghdad boil' afflicts U.S. troops in sand-fly rich Iraq

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sgt. DiVona didn't notice the bumps on his face and left hand until he returned from serving months in Iraq. Nothing much thought, probably just a spider bite. But soon those bumps and itches turned into open sores, one growing to the size of a half dollar. The left side of his face puffed up, a swelling wouldn't go away. And he realized he was not the only one in his unit with such symptoms.

What DiVona thought was a spider bite was actually caused by a tiny sand fly with a fierce bite. Stewing in its gut, an organism causes stubborn and ugly sores that linger for months.

Scientists and doctors here say the disease caused by the sand fly as cutaneous leishmaniasis, a disease soldiers serving in sandy Iraq call it, with little affection: "Baghdad boil."

The sores are not painful but are itchy, but left untreated they can last up to 18 months and leave permanent, burn-like scars.

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