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Governor
Deval Patrick in Governor's Office

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GOVERNOR PATRICK VISITS MASSACHUSETTS TROOPS SERVING IN IRAQ**Joins other governors on Department of Defense trip to extend Commonwealth's gratitude, receive update on mission**

BOSTON - Wednesday, July 21, 2010 - In a show of gratitude and appreciation for their courageous service, Governor Deval Patrick has traveled to Iraq to meet with Massachusetts servicemen and women. Joined by four other governors on a Department of Defense-sponsored trip, Governor Patrick departed Washington, D.C. from Andrews Air Force Base yesterday following briefings at the Pentagon and a visit with wounded Massachusetts soldiers at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. The governors landed at Ali Al Salem Air Base in Kuwait today before changing planes and arriving at Baghdad International Airport. They had lunch with soldiers at Camp Victory and then participated in a call with LTG Kenneth Hunzeker, Deputy Commander US Forces-Iraq and the NATO Training Mission-Iraq. The governors also had dinner with troops at Al Faw Palace.

There are currently over 1,100 Massachusetts National Guard troops deployed in the region. The Governor serves as Commander in Chief of the Massachusetts National Guard, and felt it was important to check on our servicemen and women in harm's way and to be briefed on the progress of their mission.

The Patrick-Murray Administration has made Massachusetts a national leader in veterans' services. The Commonwealth is the only state in the nation to offer local financial assistance - for food, clothing, shelter, housing and medical care - to its veterans and dependants in need. Massachusetts also provides workforce training assistance and one of the highest "Welcome Home" bonuses in the nation to veterans who return from overseas deployments and active duty military service. In addition, the state issues additional bonuses for multiple deployments - an improvement the Governor signed into law on Veterans' Day 2009.

As has been Department of Defense practice on previous trips involving Massachusetts and other governors, for security purposes the Department will not disclose information relative to additional stops on the trip in advance.

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