

Risch Visits Iraq, Meets Commander and Idaho Troops

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Jim Risch visited Iraq over the weekend where he met with General Raymond Odierno, Commander of the Multi-National Forces in Iraq. Senator Risch was also briefed by other top military commanders regarding the current operations and direction of the mission.

Risch walked the streets of Baghdad and visited a market in the Sabah al-Bur neighborhood, a Baghdad suburb. One year ago the market would have been too dangerous for such a stop. He also shared lunch with soldiers from Idaho during the one-day stop.

“It is great to see firsthand the progress being made in Iraq,” said Risch. “After walking the streets and talking with General Odierno and Idaho soldiers serving here, I am confident we are moving in the right direction. The success we have had is clearly visible and progress is being made. I am optimistic that our troops will be able to soon return home if this progress continues.”

Last year the Bush administration and the Iraqi government agreed to a withdrawal of 142,000 American service members by the end of August 2010. The remaining 35,000 to 50,000 soldiers would depart by December 31, 2011. President Obama has said he intends to honor that agreement.

The delegation also held a meeting with Muqaffaq Ar-Rubai’e, a national security advisor to Iraq’s prime minister. The stop was part of Risch’s tour of the Middle East, a region he’s assigned to oversee on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Risch was joined on the trip by Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky and Senators Saxby Chambliss of Georgia and John Barrasso of Wyoming. He will discuss his trip and other issues being taken up by Congress in his address to the Boise Chamber of Commerce Congressional Forum at the Owyhee Plaza Hotel on Friday, April, 17th.