

Violence mars Biden's Iraq visit

By [Global Research](#)

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Violence in Iraq has marred a visit by Joe Biden, the US vice president-elect, underlining the massive task the new administration faces as it takes office next week.

Biden arrived in Baghdad on Monday for talks with Jalal Talabani, the Iraqi president, and Adel Abdul-Mahdi, the vice-president, just hours after a wave of attacks, mostly near Iraqi security patrols across the capital, killed at least nine people and wounded dozens more.

Biden's visit followed stops in Pakistan and Afghanistan, where Barack Obama, the US president-elect, has vowed to refocus US military efforts even as he pushes to withdraw the 140,000 US troops from Iraq.

Withdrawal plan

Ali al-Dabbagh, an Iraqi government spokesman, told the Reuters news agency that US and Iraqi officials were meeting to implement the withdrawal plan.

"The joint committee to execute the withdrawal of forces ... agreement begins its work this week."

Al-Dabbagh said that issues to be ironed out included ensuring security in Iraq's 18 provinces - some of which were still very violent - and training security forces.

Iraqi security forces in Baghdad came under a series of bomb attacks on Monday which also killed a number of civilians.

Despite the decreasing violence across the country, local police are still being targeted as they take over control of the provinces from US forces under a new bilateral deal that took effect at the beginning of the year.

US combat troops are due to leave major cities by the middle of this year and all troops are set to withdraw from the country by the end of 2011.

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