

## **Biden greets returning Fort Bragg troops**

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Fort Bragg, N.C. — Vice President Joe Biden and his wife, Jill, visited Fort Bragg Wednesday to welcome the XVIII Airborne Corps on its return from Iraq.

The corps spent the last 15 months in charge of the Multi-National Force in Iraq. It completed that work on Saturday and passed along the command to I Corps of Fort Lewis, Wash.

About 900 soldiers have returned to Fort Bragg over the past two weeks, and XVIII Airborne Corps commander Lt. Gen. Lloyd Austin returned on Sunday.

Biden, whose son, Beau, is serving in Iraq with the Delaware Army National Guard, credited the Fort Bragg troops with improving the security of the war-torn country during their deployment.

"You gave the Iraqis a chance — a fighting chance — to reclaim the country and establish a stable government for the first time in God knows how long," he told about 1,500 troops gathered on the parade ground on post.

The vice president pointed to Iraq's provincial elections in January, in which 11 attacks were reported across the country. During the last elections, in 2005, 300 attacks occurred, he said.

Biden also thanked the troops and their families for the sacrifices they have made during repeated deployments in recent years, adding that people outside the military don't understand the burdens military families bear.

He stressed that, although the U.S. is shifting security duties in Iraq to Iraqi soldiers, Fort Bragg troops would continue to be counted on to fight the war in Afghanistan.

The visit marked the second time in a week that Biden appeared in North Carolina. Last Wednesday, he stopped in Faison and Pikeville to tout the \$787 billion federal stimulus package and its impact on rural communities.

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