



## Vice President Biden welcomes troops at Bragg

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FORT BRAGG -- Vice President Joe Biden welcomed home troops at Fort Bragg Wednesday morning.

Hundreds of members of the 18th Airborne Corps spent more than a year 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.

The group's leader said the situation on the ground in Iraq is better thanks to the efforts of our soldiers.

"Today, Iraq is experiencing the lowest levels of violence since the beginning of the war. With our help, the Iraqis successfully completed the safest free elections in their nation's history. And this was possible because of the extraordinary efforts of the great men and women of the 18th Airborne Corps," offered Fort Bragg commander Lt. Gen Lloyd Austin.

Before making his welcome home remarks, the Vice President handed out six Bronze Stars and one Meritorious Service Medal to deserving soldiers. He then thanked the troops for all the sacrifices they've made while serving in Iraq.

"A lot happened over the past 15-months that you haven't been able to share: your child takes his first step, spoke his or her first words, that birthday without you - maybe more than one," he said. "We want you to know we genuinely, genuinely, appreciate your families. Almost as much as what you've done for us. They have been incredible."

Biden has a personal connection to the war. His son, Captain Beau Biden, is currently serving in Iraq. He personally knows the sacrifices made by the men and women who stood before him on the parade field.

Vice President Biden was accompanied by his wife Jill. It was his second trip to North Carolina in days. Last week, he was here to talk about how the federal economic stimulus plan will help rural communities.

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