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'Al Qaeda rolodex' found in Iraq

- Story Highlights
- 60 percent of Iraqi foreign fighters from Saudi Arabia, Libya, documents reveal
- Documents detailing names of 700 militants in Iraq seized in U.S. raid
- Official calls documents, seized near Syrian border, an "al Qaeda rolodex"
- U.S. says both Saudi Arabia, Syria have taken steps to stem flow of foreign fighters

From CNN Pentagon Correspondent Barbara Starr

WASHINGTON (CNN) -- As many as 60 percent of the foreign fighters who entered Iraq in the past year have come from Saudi Arabia and Libya, according to documents discovered in a raid in September near the Syrian border, a senior U.S. military official in Baghdad confirmed to CNN Thursday.

The documents confiscated in that raid listed the identities of more than 700 foreign fighters in Iraq, whom the United States believes entered that country since August 2006. The official describes the documents as "an al Qaeda rolodex."

Scrutinized along with other intelligence in the hands of the U.S. military, the documents show that 60 percent of the foreign fighters who entered Iraq during that time frame came either from Saudi Arabia or Libya, the official said.

The United States believes 305 foreign fighters came from [Saudi Arabia](#), and 137 came from [Libya](#).

The raid took place in Sinjar, close to the Syrian border. That raid has been discussed in the past by the U.S. military, but this is the first time the intelligence findings have been discussed in such detail. The New York Times first reported the new information on Thursday.

The official said the number of foreign fighters has dropped off since the Sinjar raid. The U.S. military believes both Syria and Saudi Arabia in recent months have taken a number of actions to reduce the flow of foreign fighters.

"We continue to work with the countries in the region to stem the flow of foreign fighters into [Iraq](#) and appreciate the efforts they've made," said White House spokeswoman Nikki McArthur from Washington.

"These statistics remind us that extremists continue to go to Iraq because they do not want the United States nor the Iraqis to succeed in establishing a democracy there that is an ally in the war on terror," she added.

The official said in particular both countries are more closely watching military-age males who buy on-way airline tickets. The majority of foreign fighters have entered Iraq either by coming across the Syrian border, or flying into Iraq from [Syria](#).

The official said intelligence had shown that the majority of suicide bombers in Iraq in recent months had come into Iraq via airports in Syria after arriving there from their home countries.

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