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## ACTING ARMY SECRETARY VISITS TROOPS WITH TASK FORCE DANGER OF V CORPS' 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION

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**KIRKUK AIR BASE, Iraq** — Acting Secretary of the Army Les Brownlee met with Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division here August 27 to honor and commend their support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The troops are serving in Iraq as part of Task Force Danger of V Corps' 1st Infantry Division.

With a smile on his face and a microphone in hand, Brownlee addressed about 200 2nd BCT Soldiers in the base gym.

"I want to tell you how important this mission is that you are performing," Brownlee said.

"We are truly at war and we are at war with some of the most murderous, hateful thugs that we've ever faced."

Brownlee went on to say the 2nd BCT Soldiers are representing America as they defend the American people.

"You are ... providing an opportunity of freedom and democracy for the people of Iraq," he said. "They are able to observe you as you go about your duties each day, and what they see in you and the examples you set tell them a lot."

"So remember that you are in fact representing your country at the same time you are performing your mission here," he added.

By taking on that mission here, Brownlee added, America doesn't have to take it on at home.

"By fighting these terrorists here, where they train, where they organize, you are ensuring that we won't have to fight them in your own hometowns in America," he said. To eliminate doubts of American support, Brownlee made certain the crowd of Soldiers knew that their duties in Iraq were not going unnoticed.

"It is very clear today that the people of America appreciate what you are doing maybe more than any other time in our history, because the homeland of America was attacked," he said.

"The people of America know that it's only you that are standing between them and the terrorists. I ensure you that the American people appreciate what you are doing for them, and you have every reason to be very, very proud of what you are doing here."

Brownlee also said he wants Soldiers to communicate with their families as much as possible while deployed and pass along his appreciation for their service and sacrifice.

"You know when you are gone they have to put up with a lot," Brownlee said about Soldiers' families. "I promise that all of your families say they don't know when you are in danger, so they literally worry about you every minute you are gone.

"I hope you will find a way to communicate with them frequently through e-mail, phone calls or letters, and let them know you are okay. I promise you that they will be very appreciative of that."

At the end of his remarks, Brownlee fielded questions on Army issues such as deployments, stop-loss and transformation. He also made time to pose with Soldiers for their personal photos.

Sgt. Bertha Bell, an automated logistics supply specialist with Battery B, 1st Battalion, 62nd Air Defense Artillery, said she was glad to have Brownlee visit the base.

"It shows that he's for us and taking time out to meet and greet us," Bell said. "It boosted my morale to see someone from higher up show his concern for us being in a combat zone."

Brownlee came here following a trip to Kandahar, Afghanistan, where he visited 25th Infantry Soldiers deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

