

Two Bombs Kill 27 Near Iraq Police Offices

A double bombing killed at least 27 people, almost all of them police, and wounded an additional 70 in a parking lot outside the main police offices the oil-rich northern city of Kirkuk on Thursday, according to security officials.

It was the second major attack against police forces this month, after 16 people were killed in a blast outside a headquarters in the southern city of Hilla, the first week of May.

The bombings along with recent jail break attempts in Basra and Baghdad have put Iraq's forces under new scrutiny as the last of the U.S. troops prepare to leave the country at the end of the year. "This has the fingerprint of Al Qaeda," said Brigadier Jamal Tahi, Kirkuk's head policeman.

Kirkuk is rife with ethnic and sectarian tensions among Arabs, Kurds and Turkmen, all of whom view themselves as the rightful owners of the province with its immense oil reserves. The Kurds wish to annex the Kirkuk region to Kurdistan, while Arabs insist it belongs to Baghdad. Despite eight years of American-backed efforts to mediate a solution, the sides remain at loggerheads. Armed groups hope to exploit the population's differences with bombings and killings.

Read the rest of this story in the LA Times.