



The White House

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

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For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
December 15, 2003

Facts About the New Iraqi Healthcare System

Dr. Khudair Abbas, the Iraqi Interim Minister of Health, and six other physicians from Iraq, met with President Bush today to discuss recent improvements in the Iraqi healthcare system. The doctors described to the President the dedicated efforts of Iraqi healthcare professionals, and the invaluable support the Iraqi medical system is receiving from the international community. Improvements in Iraq's health services include:

- The entire country is at pre-war capabilities for providing health care -- 240 Iraqi hospitals and more than 1,200 primary health clinics are operating, offering basic healthcare services for the Iraqi people.
- Doctors' salaries have increased to between \$120 a month and \$180 a month, in comparison to \$20 a month before the war. There are roughly 22,000 physicians affiliated with the Ministry of Health, and about 35,000 nurses and nursing assistants.
- The Ministry has 100,000 healthcare professionals and staff. More than 80 percent are women.
- Iraq's 2004 budget for health care is \$950 million. Saddam Hussein's regime provided only \$16 million for the Ministry of Health in 2002, a 90 percent reduction from a decade earlier.
- Health care for some ethnic groups was almost nonexistent under Saddam's regime. The Ministry of Health is working to ensure that health care is available to all Iraqis regardless of ethnicity, geographic origin, gender, or religious affiliation.
- More than 30 million doses of children's vaccinations have been procured and distributed, and the Ministry has received grants to immunize the country's 4.2 million children under the age of five against preventable diseases such as polio, tetanus, diphtheria, measles, and tuberculosis.
- Routine vaccinations are now available to newborns, children, and mothers every day at Ministry of Health facilities across the country and are promoted nationally through immunization days on the 22nd of each month.
- Since May 24, the Ministry of Health has delivered more than 25,000 tons of pharmaceuticals and supplies to healthcare facilities across Iraq.
- The Ministry is responsible for 29,000 hospital beds.
- Since the liberation of Iraq, the country has not faced a major public health crisis.
- Three Facility Protective Services classes have trained over 1,300 personnel to protect health facilities.



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- The Ministry of Health has completed a \$1.7 million headquarters refurbishment project.
- In addition to the United States, Japan, Egypt, Korea, Turkey, Spain, Italy, Saudi Arabia, and India are providing assistance to the Ministry of Health. This assistance includes training for doctors and nurses, construction of hospitals, and donation of ambulances.

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