

## SENATOR BILL FRIST TOURS IRAQ

### *Senate Majority Leader Visits Hospitals, Air Base and Talks Agriculture*

(Balad, Iraq) -- Senator Bill Frist from Tennessee and Senator Mel Martinez from Florida made multiple strategic stops in Iraq as part of a fact-finding trip.

Sen. Frist graduated from Princeton University in 1974 and from Harvard Medical School 1978. The senator worked as a heart and lung transplant surgeon and the director of the heart and lung transplantation program at Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

In Baghdad, the senators toured the trauma center and visited with troops in the intermediary care unit at the International Zone hospital. Most significantly, they toured the lab at the Al-Bedayi Al-Jadidi Amputee Rehabilitation and Prosthetics Clinic. The state-of-the-art clinic builds prosthetic limbs after taking plaster models of a patient's amputated limb. The program is derived from rehabilitation techniques and tactics used at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

Brigadier General Robin Rand, Commander of the 332<sup>nd</sup> Air Expeditionary Wing at Balad Air Base, welcomed the senators to Iraq's only 24/7 combat airfield. Made famous by the legendary Tuskegee Airmen, the 332<sup>nd</sup> Air Wing hosts F-16s, Predator unmanned drones, C-130s and a fleet of Black Hawk helicopters.



Frist and Martinez also toured the sprawling "tent city" air base hospital and watched as doctors, nurses and technicians stabilized a soldier in the trauma center while others performed emergency surgery in the operating room under a canvass roof.



Frist and Martinez inside the Balad trauma unit

Standing in the shadows of a C-130 transport plane, Frist discussed the potential of agriculture in Iraq.



Senator Frist talks about Iraqi agriculture with McKellips

"When you look at the unbelievable fields here, you can't help but see great potential for the future. There are incredible partnerships building between the United States and Iraq," said Frist. "The University of Tennessee, for example, has a great agriculture program. There's enormous potential for the university to work hand-in-hand with Iraqi farmers."

The senator noted that Tennessee is predominantly an agricultural state and that farm production gives the state its drive and momentum.

"That's the key for Iraq, as well. Agriculture can give this country the drive and momentum it needs to prosper."

*Photos and story by Paul McKellips, U.S. Department of State, Public Affairs GO Team, on assignment in Iraq.*