



Colleagues: Many AP staffers are producing content that refers to the situation in Iraq. It might be a local story about Iraq veterans, an international diplomatic story that mentions the Iraqi conflict or coverage on the ground in Iraq itself.

Whatever the subject, we should be correct and consistent in our description of what the situation in Iraq is. This guidance summarizes the situation and suggests wording to use and avoid.

To begin with, combat in Iraq is not over, and we should not uncritically repeat suggestions that it is, even if they come from senior officials. The situation on the ground in Iraq is no different today than it has been for some months. Iraqi security forces are still fighting Sunni and al-Qaida insurgents. Many Iraqis remain very concerned for their country's future despite a dramatic improvement in security, the economy and living conditions in many areas.

As for U.S. involvement, it also goes too far to say that the U.S. part in the conflict in Iraq is over. President Obama said Monday night that "the American combat mission in Iraq has ended. Operation Iraqi Freedom is over, and the Iraqi people now have lead responsibility for the security of their country."

However, 50,000 American troops remain in country. Our own reporting on the ground confirms that some of these troops, especially some 4,500 special operations forces, continue to be directly engaged in military operations. These troops are accompanying Iraqi soldiers into battle with militant groups and may well fire and be fired on.

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