

Australian Forces Find 51 Migs in Western Iraq



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Australian Special Forces soldiers stand guard next to one of 51 Iraqi Air Force Mig fighter aircraft found under camouflage netting at an undisclosed location in Western Iraq in the last 24 hours April 18, 2003.

Lieutenant Colonel Mark Elliott said some of the planes had been buried or covered with dirt while others were hidden in buildings or under camouflage netting.

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function photoPopup(photoUrl) { photoPopupWindow =  
window.open(photoUrl,"photoPopup", "width=540,height=525,toolbar=no,status=no,resizable=no,scrollbars=yes");
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photoPopupWindow.focus();}
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AS SAYLIYA CAMP, Qatar (Reuters) - Australian special forces have found 51 Mig fighter planes hidden at an airfield in western Iraq, a senior Australian officer said on Friday. Lieutenant Colonel Mark Elliott said some of the planes had been buried or covered over with dirt while others were hidden in buildings or under camouflage netting. "To date we've found 51 aircraft, various types of Migs," Elliott told Reuters at war headquarters in Qatar. A photograph of the operation conducted over the past two days showed one plane under a net parked in a grove of palm trees. Another showed special forces uncovering small weapons on the base. "The base was relatively abandoned. There was a little bit of resistance on the way in but that was dealt with relatively quickly," Elliott said. "Once our lads returned fire they scampered." He said the newest of the planes found appeared to date from the mid-1980s. The Iraqi air force played no part in the war during which U.S. and British planes dominated the skies from the start. The latest finds show Iraq did have planes available. Last Saturday Brigadier General Vincent Brooks, spokesman for the U.S. Central Command, said U.S.-led forces had found 15 fixed-wing fighter aircraft beneath camouflage at Al Asad airfield northwest of Baghdad. Brooks said they appeared to be "in undamaged condition." Brooks said on Friday that U.S. forces had taken 30 prisoners in a skirmish north of Baghdad over the last 24 hours as Washington and its allies continued operations throughout Iraq to clean up pockets of resistance. Eight vehicles were seized

in the firefight with what Brooks described as paramilitaries operating around the town of Samarra on the road from the capital to Tikrit.