

## US military released "Mrs Anthrax" and "Dr Germ"

BAGHDAD, Dec. 19 (AFP)--The US military has released dozens of high-level detainees from the ousted regime of Saddam Hussein, including two female weapons scientists nicknamed "Mrs Anthrax" and "Dr Germ", it was revealed.

US military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Barry Johnson said eight former high-value detainees, whom he declined to name, had been released.

"Many were originally held as suspects in possible war crimes and as material witnesses" in cases against the regime, he said.



Huda Saleh Mahdi Amash, also known as "Mrs Anthrax"

"They no longer were deemed to have information in this regard," he said, adding that they were released Saturday.

An Iraqi lawyer said a total of 24 former senior Saddam officials had recently been released, including Huda Saleh Mahdi Amash, known as "Mrs Anthrax", and Rihab Taha, "Dr Germ".

"It was a decision taken on December 4," he said on condition of anonymity, adding that a number of them had received passports to leave the country.

Amash was ranked 53rd on the US-led coalition's list of most wanted officials and was arrested in May 2003 for her work in the regime's biological warfare program.



Taha holds a PhD in microbiology from a British university and was the director of an institute where scientists were carrying out research on anthrax and a bioterrorist agent based on botulism toxins.

The two were high ranking Baath party members and the only women in US hands.

Reports had swirled around on Sunday about the release of several top figures from the old regime as part of a deal to appease the disaffected Sunni Arab minority in the aftermath of elections -- a deal the lawyer confirmed.

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