

# Press Release

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## **MORE SOCCER BALLS FOR IRAQI CHILDREN THANKS TO U.S. DONORS**

Baghdad, Iraq . . . August 12, 2003 – Children throughout Iraq will be able to enjoy their favorite pastime thanks to the continued generosity of US donors. The Iraqi Ministry of Youth and Sport in conjunction with the Coalition Provisional Authority, is pleased to announce the arrival of the first of five shipments this week of soccer balls for Iraqi youth. Approximately 54,000 soccer balls were donated to Iraq through the joint efforts of Major League Soccer, the US Soccer Foundation, US AID, AEG Soccer, DHL, FEDEX and the USA Freedom Corps along with U.S. soccer players and fans.

Major League Soccer's member teams, official suppliers and fans began an "Iraqi Aid" soccer ball and equipment donation program in May, with an initial goal of 10,000 balls. The response far exceeded expectations and donations continue to come in.

Once the balls arrive at Baghdad International Airport, they will be transported to Major Coalition Commands in Baghdad, Basra, Tahill, Mosul, and Kirkuk for further distribution throughout Iraq. The 40 tons of soccer balls will then be delivered by Coalition soldiers and Marines to Iraqi Youth Centers, Sport Centers and schools.

"We are excited to receive these soccer balls and acknowledge gratefully the kind gesture they represent as we rebuild my country's Youth and Sports programs" stated Ammar Showkat, Iraqi Interim Deputy Director of Youth.

Ambassador Paul Bremer helped kick off the soccer ball distribution in June when the first 2,500 balls reached Baghdad. The soccer balls were distributed by the 352<sup>nd</sup> Civil Affairs Command to Sport and Youth Centers in one of the more economically challenged areas of Baghdad.

"The CPA and Coalition Civil Affairs are proud to assist the Iraqi Ministry of Youth and Sport in facilitating the start of the new soccer season through donations of soccer balls," stated Brigadier General John Kern, 352<sup>nd</sup> Civil Affairs Commander, who will meet the first shipment of 10,000 soccer balls at Baghdad International Airport. "Restarting the Iraqi sports program benefits the people of Iraq and provides healthy outlets for youth and adults alike."

"The children of Iraq love soccer, and many people in the United States have touched a lot of children with this gesture," stated Mr. Showkat.

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