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Maliki Removes Key Army Chiefs, Appoints Own Son

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Iraq's embattled Prime Minister Nouri Maliki has pushed his military chiefs into early retirement and placed his own son in charge of the army.

The news was leaked to various Iraqi media outlets on Saturday.

"On the order of the prime minister, the supreme commander of the ground forces, Ali Ghedan, has retired from office," a source with the Iraqi defense ministry said.

The source added that the retirement was "a direct consequence of the fall of Mosul," into the hands of the jihadist militants.

Iraq's second-largest city fell to the insurgents almost a month ago, beginning a dominoes fall of cities and territory that has the rebels in control of a third of the country.

The source also said that the prime minister had replaced Farouq Aeraji, who until recently was the chief of staff of the army, with his son Ahmad.

The premier's son, as the new army chief, deployed senior military officers to the frontlines of the battle against the insurgents, the source added.

Last month, the prime minister removed a number of high-ranking military personnel, including General Mahdi Gharawi, Abdulrahman Hantali, and Lieutenant Hassan Abdurazaq, all senior commanders in Nineveh, the province where Mosul is the capital.

Three days before the fall of Mosul, the military chiefs, along with the rest of the army, fled the chaotic scene, leaving behind heavy weaponry and ammunition. Maliki had vowed to take action against what he called “deserters.”