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Saddam-era officers dominate high ranks of ISIL: Report

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Officers serving under the rule of Iraq's former dictator Saddam Hussein are reportedly in charge of top positions in the ranks of the ISIL Takfiri terrorist group.

According to senior Iraqi officers, ISIL's top command is dominated by former officers from Saddam's military and intelligence agencies, The Associated Press reported.

Officials say there are as many as 100 to 160 Saddam-era officers in the ranks of the terrorist group. It is also said that the officers are in mostly mid- and senior-level positions.

The officers are believed to have contributed significantly to ISIL's advances in Iraq and Syria. The Saddam-era officers are reportedly entrusted by the terrorist group with such tasks as intelligence gathering, spying on the Iraqi forces, maintaining and upgrading weapons, and working for the development of a chemical weapons program.

Saddam-era military and intelligence officers have been a "necessary ingredient" in the terrorist group's advances, Patrick Skinner, a former case officer of the CIA spy agency, told The Associated Press, adding, "Their military successes last year were not terrorist, they were military successes."

Commenting on the way the Saddam-era intelligence officers manage tasks in the terrorist group, Skinner said, "They do classic intelligence infiltration. They have stay-behind cells, they actually

literally have sleeper cells."

"And they do classic assassinations, which depends on intelligence," the former CIA officer stated.

It is reported that the so-called leader of ISIL, Ibrahim al-Samarrai aka Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, became familiar with most of the former Iraqi officers in the Bucca prison camp, which was run by the United States in the southern Iraqi city of Umm Qasr.

According to the chief of a key counter-terrorism intelligence unit, who spoke on condition of anonymity, former Bucca prisoners are in charge of top positions in the leadership of the terrorist group. He said Abu Alaa al-Afari, an Iraqi militant serving as the head of ISIL's "Beit al-Mal" or treasury, at least four members of the terrorist group's so-called Military Council, and "governors" of seven of the 12 "provinces" set up by the terrorist group in the areas it holds in Iraq had been prisoners in Bucca.

The intelligence chief said the terrorist group's second-in-command and Baghdadi's deputy, Saud Mohsen Hassan, known by the pseudonyms Abu Mutazz and Abu Muslim al-Turkmani, is a former Saddam-era army major.

Ali Omran, a major general in the Iraqi army, also said Taha Taher al-Ani, an officer in Saddam's army who took away a large amount of weapons, ammunition and ordnance after the fall of Saddam, is now a commander of the terrorist group.

ISIL took over the city of Mosul in Iraq in June 2014 and later seized swathes of land in northern and western Iraq. The terrorists have since been committing heinous crimes against the people of all faiths and communities in Iraq, including both Muslims and Christians of either Arab or Kurdish ethnicity.