Iraq’s Evolving Insurgency and the Risk of Civil War

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Executive Summary

The rising insurgency in Iraq has become a “war after the war” that threatens to divide Iraq and thrust it into full-scale civil war. It dominates the struggle to reshape Iraq as a modern state, has become a growing threat to the Gulf Region, and has become linked to the broader struggle between Sunni and Shi’ite Islamist extremism and moderation and reform throughout the Islamic world.

In military terms, the insurgency has evolved into war of attrition that has now produced ten times as many Coalition casualties as the fight to topple the Regime and defeat Iraq’s army. It has also become a conflict designed to plunge the nation in sectarian and ethnic violence, and one that has created a serious risk of civil war. It is a conflict with no clear end and which can either gradually fade if the Iraqi political process and development of Iraqi forces succeeds; or suddenly divide the country in ways that no amount of Coalition effort may be able to avoid.

Many factions now threaten Iraqi security and stability. The insurgency is currently dominated, however, by Sunni Islamist extremists who oppose any negotiations or arrangement with the new Iraqi government and compromise with Coalition forces. These extremists now focus more on attacking Shi’ites, Kurds, and those Sunnis who support the new government or who might participate in the political process than on Coalition forces. Nonetheless, they still attack Coalition, diplomatic, NGO, and other non-Iraqi targets. They are seeking to force the US and its allies to withdraw from Iraq, and to defeat them through a war of attrition, but their primary goal is to prevent Iraq from emerging as unified national state dominated by a Shi’ite majority.

At the same time, sectarian and ethnic violence has come to rival the insurgency in terms of casualties and the threat it poses to political, social, and economic progress in Iraq. Shi’ite militias and death squads reply to the insurgency in kind, often killing, wounding, or kidnapping innocent Sunnis. Neighborhoods forces both protect and threat. Ethnic cleansing is forcing many Iraqis to relocate into areas where they are in the sectarian or ethnic majority or flee the country. Shi’ite and Kurdish elements in the security forces and police have joined in the pattern of revenge and violence.

The end result is the blurring of lines between insurgency and civil war, and all sides are to some extent guilty of terrorism. The fighting in Iraq has evolved over time in ways that increase the risk of intense or full-scale civil war. It is now driven by sectarian and ethnic struggles, rather than national movements and causes, and in some cases by internal struggles for power within the same sect, which is the case of the Shi’ites in Basra. In other cases, like Kirkuk, the struggle is between Kurds, and other minorities, with little role by the Sunni insurgents.

This report provides an overview of both how the Iraqi insurgency has moved towards civil conflict from its inception in the spring of 2003 through 2007, of the ways in which insurgent tactics and methods have changed over time, and the current level of civil conflict and risk of overall civil war. It is divided into five general sections.

- The first section examines Iraq under the rule of Saddam, the immediate post-war aftermath and the development of a violent insurgency in the spring and summer of 2003. It chronicles the insurgency’s inception and how it has evolved from 2003 until 2007 and examines Coalition operations to counter it.
- The second evaluates insurgent patterns of attacks, and Coalition and Iraqi casualties. It also examines insurgent tactics, methods of attack, and the political, psychological and informational warfare lessons from 2003-2006.
• The third section assesses the composition of the insurgency including Iraqi Sunni Arabs (both “Islamists and “Nationalists”), foreign jihadists, and the uncertain status of the Shi’ites. It also addresses the degree to which these factions cooperate or conflict and the role of Iraqi’s neighbors in the insurgency.

• The fourth considers Iraqi views of the threat.

• The fifth and final section offers an assessment of probable outcomes of the conflict and lessons of the war.

Trends in the Fighting and the Risk of More Intense Civil War

The insurgency remains highly sectarian and highly regional. It not only is driven by a relatively small number of Sunni insurgents, it is concentrated in a limited portion of Iraq. Some 80% of the attacks from August 29, 2005 through May 2006 occurred in only four of Iraq’s 18 provinces, although these provinces do include Baghdad and Mosul and have some 37-43% of the population. Twelve provinces, with over 50% of Iraq’s population, have been the scenes of only about 6% to 7% of all the insurgent attacks counted by the US.1

At the same time, the insurgents have shown a consistent capability to attack at two major levels of operations: First, through a wide range of constant low-level methods that have a serious cumulative effect. Second, through large attacks designed to capture media attention, intimidate and kill the government’s supporters, and prevent any form of normalization by provoking Shi’ite and Kurdish response and a more intense civil war. The attacks on Shi’ite hospitals have increasingly led to Shi’ite reprisals and broader Sunni anger and fear in response.

If one looks at the cycles in the evolving struggle, there are no clear signs that the struggle is being lost or won. For example, the number of attacks peaked to some 700 per week in October 2005, before the October 15th referendum on the constitution compared to 430 per week in mid-January. This was more a function of insurgent efforts to peak operations in sensitive periods than any outcome of the fighting. Similarly, the number of US killed has averaged some 65 per month since March 2003. The total of US killed was 96 in October 2005, 84 in November, 68 in December, and 63 in January 2006.2 This reflected shifts in the cycles of attacks and in their targets. US experts estimated that some 500 Iraqis were killed between the December 15, 2005 elections and mid-January 2006, an “average” period in US casualties.3

Later Coalition reporting has shown that the insurgency managed to increase the average number of weekly attacks during the period from around 470 in mid-2005 to 620 in May 2006, and succeeded in triggering a steady increase in civil violence and sectarian and ethnic conflict. While Coalition casualties average under 20 per day from the spring of 2005 to the spring of 2006, even a partial count of Iraqi casualties rose from less than 60 per day during February 2005 to February 2006 to 78 per day during February though May 2006.4

The quarterly reports that the Department of Defense issued to Congress do not seem to count many low-level incidents and types of civil violence.5 They omit coverage of major problem areas like Arab-Kurdish ethnic violence in the Kirkuk area, and Shi’ite violence in the Basra area. They still, however, report serious increases in civil conflict and the fact that most Iraqis came to see Shi’ite and Kurdish militias as a growing threat to security by the spring of 2006.6 Even the Coalition’s partial count of Iraqi civilian casualties showed an increase from 10% of its national total in January 2006 to 13% in March 2006, and from 10% to 18% in Baghdad.7
The key issue is not so much the intensity of the fighting, but whether the more extreme Sunni Islamists can paralyze or defeat the political process and intensify the level of civil conflict on all sides.

**Trends in Late 2005**

US and MNF-I officials provided the following summary of trends at the time of the December 2005 elections.

- Despite predictions of major violence, there were relatively few attacks by insurgents on the actual day of the October 15, constitutional referendum. Across the country, more than nine million Iraqis voted in 6,000 polling stations. Early estimates put voter turnout at 61% and only five of the capital’s 1,200 polling stations were attacked. However, incidents still occurred in spite of a halt to nearly all movement by non-military and non-governmental vehicles, and placing peak levels of Coalition and Iraqi security forces on duty. Violence returned in late October, and shows no sign of leveling off before the December elections.

- Sunni participation in the December 15, 2005 was higher than during the constitutional referendum and Sunni turnout in the October referendum was higher than anticipated. Most political parties did, however, divide along sectarian and ethnic lines. The new Council of Representatives had 275 seats and the final results for the election awarded the following numbers to the main parties: United Iraq Alliance (Shi'ites) 128 seats, Kurdish coalition 53, The Iraqi List (Secular “Allawi list”) 25, Iraqi Accordance Front (Sunnis) 44; Iraqi front for National Dialogue (Sunni) 11. Among the major parties, the Shi’ites won 47% of the 275 seats; the Kurds won 19%, the Sunnis won 20%, and Allawi’s secular nationalist won 9%.

- According to CENTCOM, 90 percent of the insurgency was Iraqi and Sunni, with a maximum of 10 percent foreign contribution to insurgent manpower. While relatively small, this foreign element was recognized as almost exclusively Sunni, a particularly violent segment of the insurgency, and ideologically driven by Neo-Salafi extremism. Likewise, the foreign element is seen as an important source of money and materiel support to the insurgency.

- Insurgent attacks against Iraqi security forces began to increase dramatically during the final months of 2004. This trend continued into 2005, when, following the January 30 elections, insurgents began to go after softer, easier Iraqi targets rather than the well trained and well equipped US forces.

- An increase in attacks on Iraqi security forces coincided with an increase in attacks on infrastructure targets. Oil pipelines in the northern part of the country have come under repeated attacks in recent months. The pipelines, linking oil fields in Kirkuk to Iraq’s largest oil refinery in Beiji and the Turkish port of Cheyhan, were disrupted more than half-a-dozen times during September and October 2005.

- Targeted political assassinations also appeared to be increasing during the summer and fall of 2005. Popular targets include local political and religious leaders, the heads of local police forces and ministry officials from Baghdad. These attacks intensified in the weeks leading up to December 15 elections.

- In addition to assassinations aimed at disrupting the judicial and political process, insurgents have carried out assassinations of religious leaders as part of their larger goal of using sectarian violence to provoke a civil war. There appeared to be an up-turn in these assassinations in late summer and early fall 2005. The number of insurgent attacks against mosques and religious gatherings also increased during this period.

- As has happened in the past before elections, an upsurge in violence in late November 2005 marked a deliberate attempt by insurgents to disrupt the Iraqi political process, specifically the upcoming December 15 parliamentary elections. But the escalation of sectarian violence was also in response to the November 13 discovery of 173 mostly Sunni malnourished and abused detainees in an Interior Ministry building in Baghdad. The US discovery of a secret torture center administered by Shi’ite-led government security forces sparked renewed sectarian violence and led to a number of tit-for-tat murders in late November.

- Attacks against foreigners in Iraq were on the rise. Insurgents resumed their kidnappings of foreigners in the fall of 2005, after almost a year of calm. During October and November, insurgents kidnapped at least
seven foreigners (2 Moroccans; 2 Canadians; 1 Brit; 1 American; and 1 German). The tactic appears to have peaked in late 2004 however.

**Trends in Early 2006**

The December 15, 2005 election did no more to stabilize the situation and limited the insurgency than the transfer of power from the CPA to the Iraqi interim government in June 2004, or any of the other elections that followed. MNF-I intelligence estimates that the number of insurgent attacks on coalition forces, Iraqi forces, Iraqi civilians and acts of sabotage rose by 29% in 2005. The total rose from 26,496 in 2004 to 34,131 in 2005. These attacks have had a relatively consistent average success rate of 24% (attacks that cause damage or casualties).

Put differently, the average number of attacks per month in the Coalition count (which tended to sharply undercount attacks on Iraqi civilians) rose from an average of around 750 in late 2004 to a peak of nearly 3,000 in October 2005, and was 2,500 in December 2005. The average had been well over 2,000 per month from April 2004 onwards.

At the same time, MNF-I data reflected a continuing shift towards attacks on Iraqis, rather than Coalition troops. A total of 673 US troops were killed in 2005, versus 714 in 2004, and the number of wounded dropped from 7,990 to 5,639, a drop of 29%. US forces saw fewer casualties largely because more Iraqi forces were in the field and there were no major urban battles like the battle of Fallujah. The number of US casualties also dropped because the insurgents shifted to Iraqi targets that were more vulnerable and had far more political impact at a point where it had become clear that the US and its coalition partners wanted to withdraw many of their forces.

The GAO summarized the status of the insurgency as follows in testimony to Congress on February 6, 2006:

> The insurgency intensified through October 2005 and has remained strong since then. As we reported in March 2005, the insurgency in Iraq—particularly the Sunni insurgency—grew in complexity, intensity, and lethality from June 2003 through early 2005. According to a February 2006 testimony by the Director of National Intelligence, insurgents are using increasingly lethal improvised explosive devices and continue to adapt to coalition countermeasures…enemy-initiated attacks against the coalition, its Iraqi partners, and infrastructure increased in number over time. The highest peak occurred during October 2005, around the time of Ramadan and the October referendum on Iraq’s constitution. This followed earlier peaks in August and November 2004 and January 2005. According to a senior US military officer, attack levels ebb and flow as the various insurgent groups—almost all of which are an intrinsic part of Iraq’s population—rearm and attack again.

As the administration has reported, insurgents share the goal of expelling the coalition from Iraq and destabilizing the Iraqi government to pursue their individual and, at times, conflicting goals. Iraqi Sunnis make up the largest portion of the insurgency and present the most significant threat to stability in Iraq. In February 2006, the Director of National Intelligence reported that the Iraqi Sunnis’ disaffection is likely to remain high in 2006, even if a broad, inclusive national government emerges. These insurgents continue to demonstrate the ability to recruit, supply, and attack coalition and Iraqi security forces. Their leaders continue to exploit Islamic themes, nationalism, and personal grievances to fuel opposition to the government and recruit more fighters.

According to the Director, the most extreme Sunni jihadists, such as al-Qa’ida in Iraq, will remain unreconciled and continue to attack Iraqi and coalition forces. The remainder of the insurgency consists of radical Shi‘ite groups, some of whom are supported by Iran, violent extremists, criminals, and, to a lesser degree, foreign fighters. According to the Director of National Intelligence, Iran provides guidance and training to select Iraqi Shi‘ite political groups and weapons and training to Shi‘ite militant groups to enable
anti-coalition attacks. Iran also has contributed to the increasing lethality of anti-coalition attacks by enabling Shi’ite militants to build improvised explosive devices with explosively formed projectiles, similar to those developed by Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah.

**Trends in Mid 2006**

The patterns of violence in Iraq have, however, clearly evolved beyond this analysis of the threat. If one looks in more detail at the patterns of conflict reported by the Department of Defense in its quarterly report to Congress, there has been a tendency to downplay the risk of civil war and the importance of threats other than Sunni insurgents. Nevertheless, the May 26, 2006 report indicates that the threat to Iraq stability has broadened beyond insurgents to include a variety of groups. These include:14

- **Sunni and Shi’a Rejectionists.** Sunni and Shi’a rejectionist use violence or coercion in an attempt to rid Iraq of Coalition forces… subvert emerging institutions and infiltrate and co-opt security and political organizations. Beyond this shared goal, Rejectionist groups diverge regarding long-term objectives. Rejectionists continue to employ a dual-track strategy in Iraq, attempting to leverage the political process to address their core concerns. Since the Samarra bombing, sectarian Rejectionist groups, including militant Shi’a militias, have increased attacks against rival sectarian groups and populations. Both Sunni and Shi’a Rejectionists have conducted reprisal ethno-sectarian attacks.

- **Former Regime Loyalists.** Saddam loyalists are no longer considered a significant threat to the MNF-I endstate and the Iraqi government. However, former regime members remain an important element involved in sustaining and enabling the violence in Iraq, using their former internal and external networks and military and intelligence expertise involving weapons and tactics. Saddamists are no longer relevant as a cohesive threat, having mostly splintered into Rejectionists or terrorist and foreign fighters.

- **Terrorists and Foreign Fighters.** Terrorists and foreign fighters, although far fewer in number than the Rejectionists or former regime loyalists, conduct most of the highprofile, high-casualty attacks and kidnappings. Many foreign fighters continue to arrive in Iraq via Syria… Al-Qa’ida in Iraq (AQI) is currently the dominant terrorist group in Iraq. They continue efforts to spark a self-sustaining cycle of ethno-sectarian violence in Iraq… AQI pursues four broad lines of operation: anti-MNF-I, antigovernment, anti-Shi’a, and external operations. Ansar al Sunna (AS) is another significant, mostly indigenous, terrorist group that shares some goals with AQI. Because of similar agendas, AQI and AS tend to cooperate on the tactical and operational levels. Most recently, there have been indications of cooperation between AQI and Rejectionists as well. It is estimated that 90% of suicide attacks are carried out by AQI… The current positive effects of intolerance for Al-Qa’ida in Iraq (AQI) among Sunni Arabs may be limited if Sunnis perceive a lack of progress in reconciliation and government participation or if increased sectarian violence draws various Sunni insurgency elements closer.

- **Militia Groups.** Militia groups help both maintain and undermine security in Iraq, as well as contribute to achieving the goals of their affiliated political parties. In many cases, these militias, whether authorized or not, provide protection for people and religious sites where the Iraqi police are perceived to be unable to provide adequate support. Sometimes they work with the Iraqi police. In some cases, they operate as a power base for militia leaders trying to advance their own agendas. Militia leaders influence the political process through intimidation and hope to gain influence with the Iraqi people through politically based social welfare programs. Militias often act extra-judicially via executions and political assassinations—primarily perpetrated by large, well-organized Shi’a militia groups and some small Sunni elements. Militias are also sometimes engaged in purely criminal activity, including extortion and kidnapping… Polling data indicate that most Iraqis agree that militias make Iraq a more dangerous place and should be disbanded… The most prominent militia groups are the Badr Organization—essentially the paramilitary wing of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, but technically its own political party now—and Shi’a cleric Moqtada al-Sadr’s Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM). The Kurdish Peshmerga is technically an “authorized armed force,” rather than a militia. Shi’a militias have been involved in sectarian violence. Tactics employed by such militias have varied, including death squads, Sharia courts, and campaigns of intimidation. Shi’a militias, including the Badr Organization and Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM), have been accused of committing abuses against Sunni civilians, exacerbating sectarian tensions. In addition, JAM is
implicated in much of the unrest that followed the February 22 Samarra mosque bombing. The Shi’a militias receive arms and other support from Iran, reinforcing Sunni fears of Iranian domination and further elevating ethno-sectarian violence.

These outside threats are compounded by sectarian and ethnic divisions within the government of Iraqi forces which sometimes aid the Sunni insurgents and more often aid violent Shi’ite and Kurdish groups. Endemic corruption in the government, and crime throughout civil society, add a further mix of threats.

**Changing Patterns in Attacks on Iraqi and Coalition Targets**

These trends scarcely mean the insurgency is “winning,” although it is hard to dismiss the risk that it may be able to paralyze political progress and create a more intense civil war. The previous data show that insurgency has not been able to increase its success rate, establish sanctuaries, win larger-scale military clashes, or dominate the field. It is active largely in only four of Iraq’s 18 governorates. (Some 59% of all US military deaths have occurred in only two governorates: Al Anbar and Baghdad.)\(^1\) Much of its activity consists of bombings of soft civilian targets designed largely to provoke a more intense civil war or halt the development of an effective Iraqi government, rather than progress towards control at even the local level. So far, the insurgency has done little to show it can successfully attack combat-ready Iraqi units, as distinguished from attacks on vulnerable casernes, recruiting areas, trainees or other relatively easy targets.

The insurgents have, however, learned and adapted through experience. They have shown the ability to increase the number of attacks over time, and they have hit successfully at many important political and economic targets. Provoking civil war and undermining the Iraqi political process may not bring the insurgents victory, but it can deny it to the Iraqi government and the US. The Sunni insurgents continue to strike successfully at politically, religiously, and ethnically important Shi’ite and Kurdish targets with suicide and other large bombings.

The insurgents have continued to carry out a large number of successful killings, assassinations, kidnappings, extortions, and expulsions. These have included a significant increase in the number of successful attacks on Iraqi officials, Iraqi forces, and their families. Well over 2,700 Iraqi officials and Iraqi forces were killed in 2005. The Department of Defense estimated that 2,603 members of the Iraqi forces had been killed in action by October 2005, far more than the 1,506 members of US forces that had been killed in action up to that date.\(^2\) The insurgents continue to succeed in intimidating their fellow Sunnis. There is no way to count or fully assess the pattern of such low level attacks, or separate them from crime or Shi’ite reprisals, but no one doubts that they remain a major problem.

Suicide attacks have increased, and killed and wounded Iraqis in large numbers. The number of car bombs rose from 420 in 2004 to 873 in 2005, the number of suicide car bombs rose from 133 to 411, and the number of suicide vest attacks rose from 7 in 2004 to 67 in 2005.\(^3\) In case after case, Shi’ite civilians and Sunnis cooperating with the government were successfully targeted in ways designed to create a serious civil war.

The use of roadside bombs (improvised explosive devices IEDs) remains a major problem for US and other Coalition forces. The total number of IED attacks nearly doubled from 5,607 in 2004 to 10,953 in 2005. While the success rate of IED attacks dropped significantly, from 25-30% in 2004 to 10% in 2005, they still had a major impact. During 2005, there were 415 IED...
deaths out of a total of 674 combat deaths, or 61.6% of all combat deaths. IEDs accounted for 4,256 wounded out of a total of 5,941, some 71.6% of the wounded. From July 2005 to January 2006, IEDs killed 234 US service members out of a total of 369 total combat deaths, or 63.4%. They accounted for 2,314 wounded out of 2,980 total combat wounded, or 77.7%.

To put these numbers in perspective, IEDs caused 900 deaths out of a total of 1,748 combat deaths, or 51.5% during the entire post-Saddam fall from March 2003 and January 2006. IEDs caused 9,327 wounded out of a total of 16,606 or 56.2%. However, the numbers of personnel killed and wounded by IEDs are scarcely the only measure of insurgent success. Casualties may have dropped but the number of attacks has gone up. IED attacks tie down manpower and equipment, disrupt operations, disrupt economic and aid activity, and interact with attacks on Iraqi civilians and forces to limit political progress and help try to provoke civil war.

Coalition casualties did not rise significant by the spring of 2006, but growing sectarian and ethnic violence had an impact. As has been touched upon earlier, the average number of weekly attacks rose from around 470 in mid-2005 to 620 in May 2006, and even a partial count of Iraqi casualties rose from less than 60 per day during February 2005 to February 2006 to 78 per day during February though May 2006. The Coalition's partial count of Iraqi civilian casualties showed an increase from 10% of its national total in January 2006 to 13% in March 2006, and from 10% to 18% in Baghdad.

Baghdad remained the center of most recorded attacks, and the Department of Defense reported that 32% of all incidents between February and late May 2006 occurred in the city.

One other point is worth noting. Neither the Iraqi government nor the Coalition provide detailed estimates of the number of foreign fighters in Iraq, and any such counts are necessarily uncertain. The number of foreign volunteers detained, or publicly recorded as killed, remains so limited, however, that Iraq must be regarded as just one of several areas of Islamic extremist activity – others include Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, Chechnya, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, and Yemen.

**The Economic Side of the Insurgency**

The insurgents have also continued to be successful in attacking the Iraqi economy and the Coalition aid effort, as well as human targets. They have often paralyzed aid efforts, particularly in Sunni or mixed areas where such efforts might win over current or potential insurgents. They have forced a massive reprogramming of aid into short-term, security-oriented activity, and well over 20% of aid spending now goes simply to providing security for aid activity. The attacks have done much to discourage or reduce investment and development even in the more secure governorates, and have blocked or sharply limited efforts to renovate and improve Iraq's infrastructure. They have largely prevented efforts to expand Iraq's oil exports -- its key source of government earnings.

Insurgents had carried out more than 300 attacks on Iraqi oil facilities between March 2003 and January 2006. An estimate by Robert Mullen indicates that there were close to 500 and perhaps as many as 600-700. His breakdown of the number of attacks was: pipelines, 398; refineries, 36; oil wells, 18; tanker trucks, 30; oil train, 1; storage tanks 4; and 1 tank farm. In addition, there were at least sixty-four incidents in which the victims were related to Iraq's petroleum sector, ranging from high ranking persons in the Oil Ministry to oil workers at refineries, pipelines, and
elsewhere in the sector, to contract, military, police, and tribal security people. The number killed in these directed attacks reached at least 100. 21

The Department of Defense has since reported that a significant cut in attacks on infrastructure and oil facilities took place during February-May 2006, but past damage now combines with the steady deterioration of oil field production and distribution facilities, ongoing problems in security, and corruption and theft to have a major impact.

Oil production dropped by 8% in 2005, and pipeline shipments through the Iraqi northern pipeline to Ceyan in Turkey dropped from 800,000 barrels per day before the war to an average of 40,000 barrels per day in 2005. In July 2005, Iraqi officials estimated that insurgent attacks had already cost Iraq some $11 billion. They had kept Iraqi oil production from approaching the 3 million barrel a day goal in 2005 that the Coalition had set after the fall of Saddam Hussein, and production had dropped from pre-war levels of around 2.5 million barrels a day to an average of 1.83 million barrels a day in 2005, and a level of only 1.57 million barrels a day in December 2005.22 These successes have major impact in a country where 94% of the government’s direct income now comes from oil exports.

The impact of such attacks has been compounded the ability of insurgents -- and Iraqi officials and civilians -- to steal oil and fuel. The New York Times has quoted Ali Allawi, Iraq’s finance minister, as estimating that insurgents were taking some 40 percent to 50 percent of all oil-smuggling profits in the country, and had infiltrated senior management positions at the major northern refinery in Baji: "It's gone beyond Nigeria levels now where it really threatens national security…The insurgents are involved at all levels." The Times also quoted an unidentified US official as saying that, "It's clear that corruption funds the insurgency, so there you have a very real threat to the new state…Corruption really has the potential of undercutting the growth potential here." The former oil minister, Ibrahim Bahr al-Ulum, had said earlier in 2005 "oil and fuel smuggling networks have grown into a dangerous mafia threatening the lives of those in charge of fighting corruption." 23

The Changing Risk of Civil War

What has changed since the transfer of power from the CPA to interim government in June 2004 is the slow and steady evolution of the insurgency towards efforts by Sunni Islamist extremist groups to target Shi‘ites, Kurds, and Sunnis in ways that provoke civil conflict.

It is important to recognize that here has been political progress in spite of the violence. The final results for the December 15, 2005 elections gave the Sunnis significant representation, in spite of complaints about fraud. The new Council of Representatives had 275 seats and the final results for the election, which were certified on February 9, 2006, gave the main parties the following number of seats: Iraq Alliance (Shi‘ites), 128 seats; Kurdish coalition, 53; The Iraqi List (Secular “Allawi list”), 25; Iraqi Accordance Front (Sunnis), 44; Iraqi front for National Dialogue (Sunnis), 11. The Shi‘ite coalition won 47% of the 275 seats, the Kurdish coalition won 21%, the Sunni coalition won 21%, and Allawi’s secular nationalists (with significant Sunni support) won 9%. 24 The final 1% of the seats went to other parties. 25 As no party won a governing majority of the seats in the parliament, a coalition government will have to be formed.

More than 12 million Iraqi’s voted in the December 2005 election. Sunni turnout increased markedly from the January elections. In Nanawa and Salah ad Din, it grew from 17% and 19% respectively to 70% and 98%. In al-Anbar Province it grew from 2% in January to 86% in
December. Nationally, voter turnout was 77%, an increase from 58% in January. Of the 1,985 election complaints received by the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq, only 3% were considered to have possibly affected the results. These complaints amounted to no more than 1% of the total vote, which was voided and excluded from the final count.

If the December 2005 election does eventually produce an inclusive national political structure that gives Iraq’s Sunnis incentives to join the government and political process, many current Iraqi Sunni insurgents are likely to end their participation in the insurgency and the more extreme elements will be defeated.

No one can deny, however, that there is a serious risk that that the political process will fail. The insurgency has found new targets and new opportunities to drive the nation towards a more intense civil war. The formation of a government gives the insurgency a strong incentive to do everything it can to prevent any meaningful unity between Arab Sunni and Arab Shi’ite, and to provoke counter-violence and attacks by Shi’ites that will drive Iraqi Sunnis to support the insurgency. It can seek to exploit divisions and fault lines within the dominant Shi’ite coalition, and try to provoke the Kurds towards increased separatism.

So far, the constitutional referendum and the election of a new Council of Representatives in December 2005 have not brought added security or stability. They have instead exposed the depth of the sectarian and ethnic divisions in Iraq, and raised serious questions as to whether any form of unified or inclusive national government can be effective.

While some form of “national” or “inclusive” coalition government is still likely to be formed, forming a government will at best be a prelude to new problems and challenges. The new government will then have to preside over a political process that offers the insurgency a host of new issues to exploit. Once the new Presidency Council, Prime Minister, and full slate of ministers are finally in place, the new government must pass legislation to clarify and codify the new constitution. This will involve a political struggle over some 55 enabling or implementing laws that are necessary to make the constitution operative. Many are potentially divisive and give the insurgency opportunities to paralyze the Iraqi political process and provoke full-scale civil war.

The key issues that must be dealt with to create a stable political structure and pattern of government in Iraq, and reduce popular support for the various types of insurgents and militias, include:

- Whether the nation should be divided into federal components by province. If this happens, it would almost inevitably be along ethnic and sectarian lines although the “Kurdish” provinces have many non-Kurdish minority elements, the “Shi’ite” provinces often have large Sunni minorities, and the “Sunni” provinces lack oil and any economic viability. Soft ethnic cleansing has already begun in many parts of Iraq, including Baghdad. “Federalism” could lead to sweeping, violent struggles over given areas and population movements.

- How the nation’s oil resources and revenues should be divided and how new areas should be controlled and developed. The Kurds lack oil reserves in their present areas and clearly want Kirkuk and the northern fields. Shi’ites in the south already talk about controlling the bulk of the nation’s proven reserves in central and southern Iraq. The Sunnis have potential reserves but no immediate assets, and the central government gets virtually all of its revenue from oil exports.
• Related issues over how to tax and increase Iraq’s revenue base, and who should control its revenues. This includes major debates over the powers of the central government, any federal areas, the provinces, and local governments.

• The future security structure of the country. Who will really control the armed forces and security forces, and have control over provincial and local police forces. This issue is complicated by a major gap that exists between the intent of the present constitution and the reality of national and local militias. It is further complicated by the fact that the present forces are dominated by Shi’ite and Kurdish elements, and could divide along ethnic and sectarian lines if the nation moved towards full-scale civil war.

• Debates over the role of Islamic law in the government and every aspect of civil law. These issues not only have the potential to divide religious and secular Iraqis but also could lead to struggles over whether Sunni or Shi’ite interpretations should dominate. Both Sunni and Shi’ite Islamist extremists could resort to violence if their views are not adopted.

• Basic issues over governance including the resulting power of the central government and ministries versus provincial and local power.

• Resolving the future of Baghdad, a deeply divided city exempt from being included in any federal area and where soft ethnic cleansing and the relocation of Shi’ites and Sunnis has already become a low-level civil conflict.

• Deciding on how the coming and future budgets should be spent, and how economic aid and development resources should be allocated, in an era where the national budget already exceeds revenues, and massive outside foreign aid and pools of oil for food funds will have been expended.

• Societal issues closely linked to religious differences, and basic differences over the respective role of secular human rights and law and religious law and custom.

Such issues are explosive at the best of times, but the new government and Council of Representatives must act almost immediately to form a Constitution Review Committee that must try to resolve all of these issues in the middle of an ongoing insurgency and the risk of civil war looming within a four-month period of its formation. It must then win the support of whatever government and mix of the Council of Representatives that exists when it makes its recommendations, and if successful, hold a referendum 60 days later. Every element of this process offers new opportunities to the insurgency if Iraq’s political process divides and falters. Every milestone offers new incentives to attack, and every leader that moves towards progress and compromise will be a target.

A New Focus on Attacks on Religious Shrines

In fact, the insurgents have already intensified their attacks on Shi’ite shrines and provoked a new level of Shi’ite response. They scored a major victory by attacking the Askariya shrine in Samarra, a Shi’ite holy landmark, on February 22, 2006. They destroyed its golden dome, although they caused no deaths.

Long before this attack, there was increasingly dangerous trend towards Shi’ite revenge killings, and violence between Shi’ites and Sunnis had already become a low-level civil war. There is no easy way to quantify the scale of such Shi’ite attacks and abuses with any precision, but no one doubts that they increased significantly after the spring of 2005.

Even so, the destruction of the shrine, which housed the graves of two revered Shi’ite imams, caused an unprecedented wave of sectarian violence in Iraq. In the five days that followed, some estimated that over 1,000 Iraqis were killed, that some 300 Sunni and Shi’ite mosques came under attack, and the country seemed to be on the brink of a large-scale civil war.28 The Iraqi
government and MNF-I have put these totals at one-third to one-half these "worst case" estimates, but the fact is that no precise numbers exist, and sectarian attacks have continued in the weeks that followed.

Government leaders did call for calm, and peaceful demonstrations were held across the Shi’ite dominated south and in ethnically mixed cities such as Kirkuk. At the same time, many statements by participants and average civilians indicate that Shi’ite patience may well be wearing thin. A Shi’ite employee of the Trade Ministry summed up such views as follows: “You have a TV, you follow the news…who is most often killed? Whose mosques are exploded? Whose society was destroyed?” Another Iraqi put it differently: “We didn’t know how to behave. Chaos was everywhere.” Even the more moderate Shi’ite newspaper, Al Bayyna al Jadidah, urged Shi’ites to assert themselves in the face of Sunni violence. Its editorial stated that it was “time to declare war against anyone who tries to conspire against us, who slaughters us every day. It is time to go to the streets and fight those outlaws.”

Shi’ite religious leaders also continued to call for calm, but their message was sometimes ambiguous both in terms of words and actions. For example, Moqtada Al-Sadr ordered his Mahdi Militia to protect Shi’ite shrines across Iraq, and blamed the US and Iraqi government for failing to protect the Askariya shrine saying, “If the government had real sovereignty, then nothing like this would have happened.” In a speech from Basra, al-Sadr also called for restraint and unity amongst Iraqi’s: “I call on Muslims, Sunnis and Shi’ites, to be brothers…Faith is the strongest weapons, not arms.” He also publicly ordered his listeners to not attack mosques in retaliation saying, “There is no Sunni mosques and Shi’ite mosques, mosques are for all Muslims…it is one Islam and one Iraq.”

Despite Sadr’s rhetoric, however, it appeared that his militia was responsible for at least some of the violence. Amid demonstrations and condemnations from both Sunni and Shi’ite political leaders, Shi’ite militias such as al-Sadr’s Mahdi Army sought revenge against Sunnis’ and carried out numerous killings and attacks on Sunni mosques. Sunni groups reciprocated.

Sunni politicians have since made many charges that Sunni mosques in Baghdad and some southern cities were attacked or actively occupied by the Mahdi Army in the days following the attacks. The Association of Muslim Scholars, a hard-line Sunni clerical organization, alleged on Thursday that 168 Sunni mosques were attacked, 10 imams killed and 15 abducted. The association also made direct appeals to al-Sadr to intervene and stop the violence, apparently suspecting he was a primary coordinator of the Shi’ite attacks. In early March however, US government estimates put the number of mosque attacks at 33, only nine of which were destroyed or sustained significant damage. In some Sunni areas, residents, fearing attacks on their mosques, erected barricades and stood watch. In Al Moalimin district, armed men patrolled the roof of the Sunni mosque Malik bin Anas.

There is no doubt that the attack and its aftermath threatened progress in forming an inclusive government. Iraqi political figures called on the country to recognize that the attack was an attempt to create a civil war and urged Iraqi’s to be calm. President Jalal Talabani said the day of the attacks, “We are facing a major conspiracy that is targeting Iraq’s unity…we should all stand hand in hand to prevent the danger of a civil war.” President Bush echoed these sentiments saying, “The terrorists in Iraq have again proven that they are enemies of all faiths and of all humanity…the world must stand united against them, and steadfast behind the people of Iraq.”
The violence resulted in the announcement by the dominant Sunni party that it would suspend talks to form a coalition government and issued a list of demands. The immediate attention given to these demands by the Iraqi government, and a telephone call from President Bush to the leaders of the seven major political factions urging them to reinitiate talks, brought Sunnis back to a meeting with their Shi’ite and Kurdish counterparts. Later that evening, Prime Minister al-Jaafari, accompanied by the leaders of the other major coalitions, announced at a press conference that that country would not allow itself to engage in civil war and that this was a moment of “terrific political symbolism.”

The reaction of Iraqi security, military and police units to the sectarian violence that followed the bombing of the Askariya shrine was considered by some in the US and Iraq to be a test in how well these forces could provide security for their own country in a crises. Opinions differ greatly, however, over whether ISF forces passed this test. The MNF-I has said the armed forces played a major role in limiting and halting sectarian violence. Others have said they often allowed Shi’ite groups to attack Sunni mosques, and that the security forces and police did little to calm the violence. The data that have emerge since the attack tend to support many of the MNF-I claims, but the risks of growing divisions in the Iraqi forces, and a tilt towards the Shi’ite and Kurdish side remain all too real.

Some claim that Iraq has already reached the precipice of civil war, seen the dire consequences, and soberly held itself back. These individuals read events in late February as a “turning point” for Iraq. For others, the recent sectarian violence is a much more limited trend towards deepening civil conflict. In balance, the risks of large-scale civil war have increased, but it is too soon for pessimistic predictions. Iraqis may have drifted toward more intense civil conflict, but the levels of violence are still comparatively limited. Moreover, for all of the political risks, there are opportunities as well, and many Iraqis in every sectarian and ethnic faction understand the real possibility of further escalation and its potential consequence of dividing the country.

**Insurgent Tactics and Goals**

If one turns to the tactical level, many of the trends are clearer. The Sunni part of insurgency has become the equivalent of a distributed network: a group of affiliated and unaffiliated moves with well-organized cells. It is extremely difficult to attack and defeat because it does not have unitary or cohesive structure or a rigid hierarchy within the larger movements. The larger movements seem to have leadership, planning, financing, and arming cadres kept carefully separate from most operational cells in the field. Accordingly, defeating a given cell, regional operation, or even small organization does not defeat the insurgency although it can weaken it.

- The insurgency has effectively found a form of low technology "swarm" tactics that is superior to what the high technology Coalition and Iraqi forces have been able to find as a counter. It can move slowly, in cycles, and episodically, concentrating on highly vulnerable targets at the time of its choosing. Media coverage, word of mouth, and penetration into Coalition and Iraqi government operations provides both intelligence and a good picture of what tactics work in military, political, and media terms. Movements can "swarm" slowly around targets of opportunity, and rely on open source reporting for much of their intelligence and knowledge of combat effectiveness. The Internet and infiltration from other nations gives them knowledge of what tactics work from other areas. The ability to "swarm" against vulnerable civil and military targets at the time of the insurgent's choosing, and focus on political and media effects sharply reduces the need to fight battles -- particularly if the odds are against the insurgents.

- The insurgency operates both above and below the level of Coalition and Iraqi conventional superiority. It avoids battles when it can, and prefers ambushes and IED attacks that strike at Coalition and Iraqi targets.
with either great superiority at the local level or through remote attacks using IEDs. It attacks vulnerable Iraqi and foreign civil targets using suicide bombings, kidnappings, assassinations, and other tactics in ways that the Coalition and Iraqi forces cannot anticipate or fully defend against. It takes advantage of substantial popular support in Sunni areas to disperse and hide among the population, forcing the Coalition and Iraqi forces to use tactics and detainments that often alienate the people in the areas where they attack or attempt to detain insurgents, while still allowing the insurgents to disperse and escape. These tactics deprive the Coalition and Iraqi forces of much of their ability to exploit superior weapons, IS&R assets, and conventional war fighting expertise, and use a countervailing strategy focused on Coalition and Iraqi government weaknesses. Coalition and Iraqi forces are adapting but are still often forced to fight the insurgency on the insurgency's terms.

- The insurgency attacks above the level of Coalition and Iraqi conventional superiority by exploiting a diverse mix of past loyalty to the Ba'ath Party, Sunni sectarianism and fears of the loss of power and resources, Iraqi nationalism against foreign occupiers and Iraq "puppets," and Islam against sectarianism. Its attacks are designed to wear down the Coalition forces through attrition and destroy their base of domestic political support. They are also designed paralyze the Iraqi government and force development effort, to prevent Iraqi Sunnis from joining the Iraqi forces and supporting the government, to provoke Shi'ite and Kurdish reactions that will further divide the country along ethnic and sectarian lines, and -- in some cases -- provoke a civil war that will both prevent Iraq emerging as a nation and divide in ways that will create a national and eventual regional struggle between neo-Salafi Islamic Puritanism and other Sunnis, Shi'ites, and secular voices. This political battle is more important to the success or failure of the insurgency than any aspect of the military battle.

The Shi'ite and Kurdish side of the insurgency assumes a far more indirect role, and is more an actor in the low-level civil war than a player in the insurgency, but presents a serious problem. Shi'ite elements of the local police and Ministry of the Interior are attacking Sunnis and committing serious abuses. The Kurds are exploiting their control of the three provinces that made up the Kurdish enclave under Saddam Hussein in ways that give them advantages over other ethnic groups in the region, and present the threat of soft ethnic cleansing in the area of Kirkuk. The inclusiveness of the national government is at risk, as is the effort to create truly nation Iraqi forces.

**Probable Outcomes**

The positive side is that Shi'ite, Kurdish, and some key Sunni leaders still actively work for a united Iraq. More and more Iraqi forces are coming on-line, playing an active role, and taking over their own battlespace. The insurgency so far lacks major foreign support, although it does get limited amounts of money, weapons, and foreign fighters. It does not have the support of most Shi'ites and Kurds, who make up some 70-80% of the population.

*If* Iraqi forces become effective in large numbers, *if* the Iraqi government demonstrates that its success means the phase out of Coalition forces, and *if* the Iraqi government remains inclusive in dealing with Sunnis willing to come over to its side, the insurgency should be defeated over time -- although some cadres could then operate as diehards at the terrorist level for a decade or more.

The negative side is that there is a serious risk of full-scale civil war. The efforts of the insurgents to divide Iraq along sectarian and ethnic lines are having some success and are leading to Shi'ite and Kurdish reprisals that are causing fear and anger among Sunnis. Shi'ite and Kurdish federalism, mixed with the rise of Shi'ite religious factions and militias, can divide the country. The Iraqi political process is unstable and uncertain, and parties and officials are now identified (and identifying themselves) largely by sect and ethnicity. Severe ethnic and sectarian divisions exist inside the government at the national, regional, and local levels. Popular support for the Coalition presence in Iraq is now a distinct minority in every Coalition country.

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In short, the odds of insurgent success at best are even. Iraq could degenerate into full-scale civil conflict or remain divided and/or unstable for some years to come. There already is limited popular support in the US and Britain for a continued military role and major new aid programs, and continued political turmoil or serious civil war could make a continued Coalition presence untenable and drive US and British forces out of Iraq. It seems likely that the US will have to slow its plans to reduce its military presence, adjust to new threats, and intensify its efforts to shape effective security and police forces if it is to deal with the growing risk of civil conflict during the period in which the new government must come to grips with all of the issues raised by the constitution -- a period which now seems likely to last until at least September of 2006.

Much depends on the success of the Iraqi political process following the December 15th election, how Iraqis deal with the range of issues raised by the Constitutional referendum and need for action on its outcome once a new government takes office. Much also depends on how well Iraqi forces succeed in becoming effective at both the military and political level, and in replacing Coalition forces. Finally, much depends on the ability of the new Iraqi government to take responsibility for what happens in Iraq, lead effectively, and establish effective police and government services in the field -- all areas where previous Iraqi governments have been weak.

There is also a continuing possibility that the insurgency will drive Iraq's political and religious leaders and various elements of the Iraqi forces into warring Sunni, Shi'ite, and Kurdish factions. Even the most committed leaders may be forced to abandon the search for a national and inclusive political structure if sectarian and ethnic fighting escalates out of control. Those that do not, may be replaced by far more extreme voices.

The new Iraqi forces can divide along ethnic and sectarian lines and much of the police and security forces already are divided in this way. There is also a risk that Iraq could bring in outside powers supporting given factions. Iran supporting Iraqi Shi’ites, the Arab Sunni states supporting Iraq Sunnis, with the Kurds left largely isolated and facing increasing problems with the Turks. Any precipitous Coalition withdrawal would greatly encourage this possibility.

**The Lessons of Complexity, Uncertainty, and Risk**

Whatever happens, the US and its allies need to consider the lessons of the "war after the war" in Iraq. One key lesson is the need for ruthless objectivity and to accept the political and military complexity of counterinsurgency. Far too often, policymakers, analysts, and intelligence experts approach the subject of counterinsurgency by trying to oversimplify the situation, underestimate the risks, and exaggerate the level of control they can achieve over the course and ultimate strategic outcome of the war.

They try to deny both complexity of most counterinsurgency campaigns, and the full range of issues that must be dealt with. In doing so, many try to borrow from past wars or historical examples, and they talk about “lessons,” as if a few simple lessons from one conflict could be transferred easily to another. The end result is that -- far too often -- they end up rediscovering the same old failed slogans and over simplifications and trot out all the same old case histories without really examining how valid they are.

There is a great deal to be learned from past wars if the lessons are carefully chosen and adapted as potential insights into a new conflict rather than transferable paradigms. The Iraq War, however, is not the Afghan War, much less Mao, Malaysia, Vietnam, Northern Ireland, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There is nothing to be gained from efforts to revive the same old
tactical and technical solutions, without remembering past failures. “Oil spots,” “hearts and minds,” “Special Forces,” walls and barriers, and sensor nets are just a few examples of such efforts that have been applied to the Iraq War.

The Need For Accurate Planning and Risk Assessment

Much has been made of the intelligence failures in assessing Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. These failures pale to insignificance, however, in comparison with the failure of US policy and military planners to accurately assess the overall situation in Iraq before engaging in war, and for the risk of insurgency if the US did not carry out an effective mix of nation building and stability operations. This failure cannot be made the responsibility of the intelligence community. It was the responsibility of the President, the Vice President, the National Security Advisor, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

All had the responsibility to bring together policymakers, military planners, intelligence experts, and area experts to provide as accurate a picture of Iraq and the consequences of an invasion as possible. Each failed to exercise that responsibility. The nation’s leading policymakers chose to act on a limited and highly ideological view of Iraq that planned for one extremely optimistic definition of success, but not for risk or failure.

There was no real planning for stability operations. Key policymakers did not want to engage in nation building and chose to believe that removing Saddam Hussein from power would leave the Iraqi government functioning and intact. Plans were made on the basis that significant elements of the Iraqi armed forces would turn to the Coalition’s side, remain passive, or put up only token resistance.

No real effort was made to ensure continuity of government or stability and security in Iraq’s major cities and throughout the countryside. Decades of serious sectarian and ethnic tension were downplayed or ignored. Actions by Saddam Hussein’s regime that had crippled Iraq’s economic development since the early years of the Iran-Iraq War – at time when Iraq had only 17-18 million people were ignored. Iraq was assumed to be an oil wealthy country whose economy could quickly recover if the oil fields were not burned, and transform itself into a modern capitalist structure in the process.

The nation’s most senior military commanders compounded these problems by planning for the conventional defeat of the enemy and an early exit from Iraq, by making a deliberate effort to avoid “Phase IV” and stability operations. The fact they did so to minimize the strain on the US force posture, and the “waste” of US troops on “low priority” missions played a major role in creating the conditions under which insurgency could develop and flourish.

The intelligence community and civilian and military area experts may not have predicted the exact nature of the insurgency that followed. Analysis is not prophecy. They did, however, provide ample warning that this was a risk that Iraqi exiles were often failing to provide a balanced or accurate picture, and nation building would be both necessary and extremely difficult. The nation’s top policymakers choose to both ignore and discourage such warnings as “negative” and “exaggerated,” and to plan for success. They did so having seen the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the sectarian and ethnic problems of Afghanistan.

To succeed, the US must plan for failure as well as success. It must see the development or escalation of insurgency as a serious risk in any contingency were it is possible, and take preventive and ongoing steps to prevent or limit it. This is an essential aspect of war planning.
and no Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, service chief, or unified and specified commander can be excused for failing to plan and act in this area. Responsibility begins directly at the top, and failures at any other level pale to insignificance by comparison.

This is even truer because top-level policymakers failed to recognize or admit the scale of the problem as it developed. Their failures were as much failures of reaction as prediction or contingency planning, and failures to accurately assess and react to ongoing events are far less excusable. There were no mysteries involving the scale of the collapse of the Iraqi government and security forces within days of the fall of Saddam Hussein. The reaction was slow, inadequate, and shaped by denial of the seriousness of the problem.

This situation did not improve until more than a year after the fall Saddam’s regimes, and at least six months after it became apparent that a serious insurgency was developing. Major resources did not flow into the creation of effective Iraqi forces until the fall of 2004. The US aid effort behaved for nearly a year and a half as if insurgency was truly a small group of diehards or “terrorists.” Even in late 2005, top US civilian policymakers split hairs over semantics to try to even avoid the word insurgency, failed to perceive that many Sunni Arab Iraqis see such an insurgency has legitimate causes, and chose to largely publicly ignore the risks of civil conflict and the developing problems in Shi’ite forces and political structures.

The US denied risks and realities of the Vietnam War. European powers initially denied the realities that forced them to end their colonial role. Israel denied the risks and realities of striking deep into Lebanon and seeking to create a Christian-dominated allied state. Russia denied the risks and realities of Chechnya in spite of all the brutal lessons of having denied the risk and realities of Afghanistan.

The failure to learn the need for accurate characterization of the nation and region where counterinsurgency may -- or does -- exist seems to be a constant lesson of why nations go to and stay at war. The failure to plan for risk and failure as well as success is equally significant. Ruthless objectivity is the cheapest solution to be preventing and limiting insurgency, and planning and deploying for the full range of stability operations and nation building is an essential precaution wherever the stakes are high and the risk is significant.

**The Limits of "Oil Spots"**

The "oil spot" theory, for example, is useful if it simply means securing key populated areas and allowing local governance to become effective and people to feel secure enough to see the insurgents as defeatable. Winning hearts and minds does not mean persuading people to accept constant daily threats and violence. The creation of safe areas is critical. Success in Iraq, and many other campaigns, will depend heavily on finding the right trade-offs between creating safe areas and aggressively pursuing the enemy to prevent the insurgents from creating safe areas of their own and attacking the safe area of the Iraqi government and Coalition.

At a different level, however, “oil spots” are simply one more slogan in a long list of such approaches to counterinsurgency. Iraq is not atypical of many insurgencies in the fact that the key areas where insurgencies are active are also centers of ethnic and sectarian tension, and that the insurgency within these areas is also a low-level civil war.

In cities like Baghdad and Mosul, the most important potential “oil spots,” it simply is not practical to try to separate the constant risk of more intense civil conflict from defeating the
insurgency. Sectarian and ethnic conflict has intensified in spite of local security efforts, and a concept that ultimately failed in Vietnam is in many ways simply not applicable to Iraq.

Neither option can really be chosen over the other. Worse, in a highly urbanized country -- where many major urban areas and their surroundings have mixed populations and the insurgency can exploit serious ethic and sectarian tensions -- creating coherent safe areas in major cities can be difficult to impossible. Rapid action tends to force the US to choose one sect or ethnic group over others. It also presents major tactical problems in the many mixed areas including Iraq's major cities. It is far from clear whether it is even possible to guard any area against well-planned covert IED and suicide bombing attacks, or make it feel secure unless enough political compromise has already taken place to do a far better job of depriving insurgent of popular support.

Creating secure "oil spots" in sectarian and ethnic based insurgencies like the Iraqi War also requires effective local governance and security forces. US and allied Coalition forces cannot create secure areas because they are seen as occupiers and lack the area expertise, language skills, HUMINT, and stable personal contacts to know if the insurgents are present or the area is really secure. Iraq is a good example of a case where an ally may be able to eventually make areas secure, but where the political dimension is critical, and Coalition forces cannot solve either the security or political problem without a local ally's aid.

**The Limits of Technology and Western "Swarm" Techniques**

An honest assessment of the insurgent Iraq War, and particularly of its political and ideological dimensions, also illustrates that technology is not a panacea even for the warfighting part of the conflict. This is particularly true when the insurgency is far more "human-centric" than net-centric and when insurgency is mixed with civil ethnic and sectarian conflict.

For example, sensors, UAV, and IS&R can have great value in Iraq, just as they did in Vietnam and South Lebanon, but they are anything but “magic bullets.” The unattended ground sensor program in Vietnam was once touted as such a magic bullet but took less than a year to defeat. Decades later, the Israelis tried using UAVs and unattended ground sensors in Southern Lebanon, and developed a remarkable amount of statistical evidence and technical data to indicate a more modern approach *would* work. In practices, the IDF's efforts led Hezbollah to develop more sophisticated tactics and IEDs at a fraction of the cost of the Israeli detection and defense effort, and Israel was eventually defeated. Both experiences are warnings about the limits of technology.

At a different level, the informal distributed networks and "swarming" of the Iraqi insurgents is a serious warning about the limits of technology-based efforts to rely on high technology formal networks and "swarming" of the kind Australia choose in its Complex Warfighting doctrine, and efforts to use small, semi-autonomous combat elements that can suddenly come together and "swarm" an enemy concentration with a mix of different joint force elements integrated by modern IS&R systems and battle management. This may work where the insurgency is small, and where the population is neutral, favorable to the outside force, and/or hostile to the insurgents. The Iraq War shows that it has very acute limits in a more modern state where political and military conditions are far less favorable.

The same is true of the British Future Land Operating Concept (FLOC) and so-called C-DICT (Countering Disorder, Insurgency, Criminality and Terrorism) approach. It is certainly wise to
adopt a "system centric" approach that combines the human element, all elements of joint forces, and tailored IS&R and battle management. But, this is no solution to force density problems or the challenges raised by an insurgency that can still attack both below and above the level of operations that FLOC forces can use. It is a useful tool, but scarcely an answer to ideological and political warfare where the insurgent operates against different targets at a different pace, and large elements of the population support the insurgency and/or are hostile to the counterinsurgents. Under these conditions, a foreign force with a different culture and religion can use such an approach to aid a local ally but cannot win on their own.

The US Army and Marine Corps approach to "distributed operations," and approaches to "counterinsurgency," "small wars," "a modular army," and "pacification" come up against the same basic problem in a case like Iraq. Like the Australian and British approaches, they can have value under the right conditions. They become dangerous and self-defeating, however, the moment tactics and technology become ends in themselves, and the dominance of political and cultural factors are ignored. Mao's description of the people as a sea that insurgents can swim in, indistinguishable from all those around them, is no universal truth but it is a warning that in many cases, only allied forces and allied governance can prevent the outside force from losing to a vastly cheaper and smaller force simply because it is perceived as a crusader or occupier and the insurgency does not face an effective local government or mix of local forces.

**The “Undrainable Swamp”**

These political risks illustrate another lesson that Iraq teaches about both counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. Many analysts have suggested that the key to victory is to remove the causes of terrorism or insurgency, to remove popular support for such movements and give terrorists and/or insurgents’ incentives to join civil society. In short, to “drain the swamp.”

The fundamental wisdom of such an approach is undeniable, but everything depends upon its feasibility. In Iraq’s case, in Vietnam, and in many other cases, the problem is that the US cannot drain the swamp. It is dealing with a foreign country, different religions and ideologies, and different goals and values. It is perceived by a significant percentage of the people as an invader, occupier, neo-colonial power, “crusader,” or simply as selfishly serving its own strategic interests. Language alone presents serious problems, and American public diplomacy is too ethnocentric to be effective.

The US can encourage political, economic, and social reform, but cannot implement it. Like Iraqis, people must find their own leaders, political structures, and methods of governance. The US lacks basic competence in the economics of nation building in societies whose economic structures, ability to execute reforms and projects, and perceived values differ significantly from its own. Different cultures, human rights practices, legal methods, and religious practices can be influenced to evolve in ways the US sees as positive, but there are no universal values, and the US cannot shape a different nation, culture, or religion.

In many cases, the sheer scale of the problem is also a major factor. Demographic, ethnic, and sectarian problems can take a generation or more to fully solve. Decades of economic failure, neglect, and discrimination can also take a decade or more to fix. A lack of rule of law, working human rights, pragmatic and experienced leaders and political parties cannot be fixed by a few years of outside aid and education.
It should be stressed that this in no way means that the US cannot exert tremendous influence during a major counterinsurgency or counterterrorism campaign, or that the US should not seek reform and change. But, the swamp will almost always be undrainable unless a host government and power-set of local political movements drives the process. Religious, cultural, and ideological reform must come largely from within. The local populace must see the reason for economic reform, and believe in it enough to act. Governance and security must be largely local to be perceived as legitimate. Equally important, if the swamp can be drained, the process will generally take so long that a US counterinsurgency campaign will be lost or won long before the process is completed.

The US failed to act on these realities in Vietnam. It began the Iraq War by rejecting them, and greatly strengthened the insurgency in the process while wasting critical months before it made effective efforts to help the Iraqis help themselves. More than two years after the “end” of the war, it still has not shaped an aid process focused around the Iraqis, local methods, local needs, and local methods and execution. Part of an effective counterinsurgency strategy is to honestly assess all of the underlying causes that sustain an insurgency, know what the US can credibly hope to do to address them, understand that the US will only be effective if local leaders can help themselves, and face the fact that so much time will be needed to fully deal with such problems that the US can normally only hope to start the process of reform and removing underlying causes during the duration of most counterinsurgency campaigns.

The Limits of Cheerleading and Self-Delusion

There is no way to avoid the fog of war, but there is no reason to make it a self-inflicted wound. Counterinsurgency cannot be fought on the basis of political slogans, official doctrine, ideology, and efforts to spin the situation in the most favorable terms. Unless warfighters and policymakers honestly address the complexity, unique characteristics, and risks and costs of a given conflict, they inevitably come up with solutions that, as the old joke states, are “simple, quick and wrong.” History shows all too clearly that this “simple, quick and wrong” approach is how Americans have created far too many past problems in US foreign policy, and that it is a disastrous recipe for war. In retrospect, fewer US failures occurred because it lacked foresight, than because it could not resist praising itself for progress that did not really exist and choosing simplicity at the expense of reality.

To use another old joke, Iraq is another case where Americans have tended to treat counterinsurgency as if were a third marriage, “a triumph of hope over experience.” The prior history of the insurgency shows that the US began by underestimating the scale of the problems it really had to face and just how many resources, how much time, and how expensive in dollars and blood the cost would be. Counterinsurgency campaigns cannot be based on hope and best cases if the US wants to win. American policy and military planners have to examine all of the variables, prioritize, and be very careful about the real-world importance of any risks and issues they dismiss. They must be ready for the near certainty of major problems and gross failure in unanticipated areas.

The reality is that counterinsurgency warfare is almost always a “worst case” or nations like the US would not become involved in it in the first place. The US and other Western states become involved in counterinsurgency because an ally has failed, because a friendly nation has failed or because diplomacy and foreign policy have failed. Almost by definition, counterinsurgency means things have already gone seriously wrong.

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The New Fog of War and the "Law of Unintended Consequences"

Iraq is one more illustration of the reality that the "fog of war" evolves at the same rate as technology and tactics. Regardless of success in battle, no country can afford to ignore the fact that the course and outcome of counterinsurgency wars is inevitably affected by the "law of unintended consequences." Risk analysis is remarkably difficult, because risk analysis is based on what we think we know going in, and that set of perceptions almost invariably proves to be seriously wrong over time. Both allies and enemies evolve in unpredictable ways. Political, social and economic conditions change inside the zone of conflict in ways the US and its allies cannot anticipate.

Wars broaden in terms of the political impact on regions and our global posture. Conflict termination proves to be difficult to impossible, or the real-world outcome over time becomes very different from the outcome negotiators thought would happen at the time. The reality proves far more dynamic and uncertain than is predicted going in; the fight requires far more time and resources necessary to accomplish anything than operators plan for.

All planning for counterinsurgency warfare must be based on the understanding that there is no way to eliminate all such uncertainties, and mistakes will inevitably be made that go far beyond the ones that are the result of political bias or ideology. There are some who would believe that if only planners and analysts could work without political bias or interference, this would solve most of counterinsurgency problems. In reality, even the best planners and analysts will face major problems regardless of their political and military leadership. The scale of ignorance and uncertainty will inevitably be too great when we enter most counterinsurgency contingencies. The US and its allies must accept this as part of the price of going to war.

It is frightening to look back at the almost endless reams of analyses, plans, and solutions that people advanced in war colleges, think tanks and universities during the Vietnam War, El Salvador and Lebanon. Vietnam may have represented the nadir of American analysis, planning, and objectivity. However, Somalia, the Dayton accords, and Iraq also represented a failure to analyze the situation properly. Even when the US analyzed well, it failed to translate this analysis into effective counterinsurgency plans and operational capabilities within the interagency process.

Moreover, time and again, the US drifted into trying to win in tactical terms rather than focusing on how it could achieve the desired national, regional, and grand strategy outcome. It forgot that it is only the endgame that counts, and not the means. It also forgets that slogans and rhetoric, ideology, and a failure to fully survey and assess ultimately all become a source of self-inflicted wounds or friendly fire.

The Lesson of Strategic Indifference; Of Knowing When to Play -- and When Not to Play-- the Counterinsurgency Game

The seriousness of the insurgency in Iraq, and the costs and risks imposed by such a comparatively small insurgent force with so many tactical limitations, also raise a lesson the US seem to repeatedly learn at the end of counterinsurgency campaigns and then perpetually forget in entering into the next conflict. Not every game is worth playing, and sometimes the best way to win is not to play at all—even if this does mean years of instability and accepting the uncertainties of civil conflict.
It is far easier to blunder into a war like the Iraq War than blunder out. It is easy to dismiss the risks of becoming bogged down in local political strife, ignore the risks of counterinsurgency, and civil conflict, downplay economic and security risks, and mischaracterize the situation by seeing the military side of intervention as too easy and the political need for action as too great. It is far too easy to exaggerate the threat. It is equally easy to both exaggerate the ability of a counterinsurgency campaign to achieve a desired strategic outcome and ignore the fact that history is often perfectly capable of solving a problem if the US does not intervene.

Personal anecdotes can lead to dangerous overgeneralizations, but they can also have value. A few years ago, I toured Vietnam, and saw from the Vietnamese side their vision of what had happened in the war. There were many tactical and political lessons I drew from that experience, one of which was how thoroughly we ignored what was happening to Buddhist perceptions and support at the political level while we concentrated on the tactical situation and the politics of Saigon.

The lesson I found most striking, however, was seeing the grand strategic outcome of the war as measured by even the most trivial metrics. I bought a bottle of mineral water in Hanoi airport and discovering that on the front label it said “USA Water,” while its back label stated that it had been processed through a 14-step process developed by NASA. When I looked at the toy counter, I saw that the bulk of toys consisted of US fighters or fighters with US marking. When I walked over to the news counter, I saw the “Investor’s Journal” in Vietnamese and English. This was after being told repeatedly how glad the Vietnamese were that we stayed in Asia as a deterrent to China. We were right in many ways about the domino theory, we just forgot that dominoes could fall in two directions.

Is Counterinsurgency the Right Means to the End?

This raises another lesson the US needs to carefully evaluate in dealing with future security problems and crises. Even if the game is worth playing, counterinsurgency may not be the way to play it, particularly if the nation is divided along sectarian, ethnic, or tribal lines in ways where there is no clear “good side” or positive force for change. Robert Osgood made the point a long time ago that when a nation engages in limited war, it does it for limited purposes. If a nation cannot keep the war and the purposes limited, it should not engage. History shows that it is amazingly easy to forget this. There are times when a counterinsurgency campaign is necessary or will be forced on the US from the outside, but there are many times when the US has a choice of the means it can use to achieve a given end, and can choose options other than counterinsurgency.

Containment is one such option. Every reader will have to decide for him or herself if they had known when the Coalition went into Iraq what they know today, whether they would still have rejected containment as the option? If one considers military involvement in Iran or Syria, the same issues arise as to whether containment and diplomacy are quite that bad a choice versus expanding a limited war or regime change -- at least by force?

If containment is not a substitute for counterinsurgency, the US must ask whether it should take advantage of military options where it retains advantages insurgents cannot counter: the ability to carry out selective strikes with limited cost. Placing US forces on the ground where they must conduct a major counterinsurgency or counterterrorism campaign is far more costly and risk-oriented than using limited amounts of force in precision strikes or other carefully limited forms.
Sanctions and sustained political pressure often have severe limits, but they too can sometimes achieve the desired result in ways that are less costly than counterinsurgency.

Even when a counterinsurgency or counterterrorism campaign is necessary, using US forces may often be the wrong answer. It is true that the US will normally only consider engaging in counterinsurgency because the nation it is going to fight is weak or divided. Far too often, however, we seem to commit our forces to combat. In many cases, it will still be better to rely on the local ally and build up their forces, even if this means a higher risk of losing in what is, after all, a limited war.

No nation is every likely to stay a “failed nation.” This does not mean, however, that the US can “fix” any given country in the face of massive political and social divisions, economic weakness or collapse, and/or ideological and religious turmoil. The world’s worst problems are its most tragic problems, but this does not mean that the US can decisively change them with affordable amounts of force, aid, and efforts at political reform. If anything, Iraq is a warning that the US does not know how to measure and characterize the risks of intervention, is not structured to combine nation building and counterinsurgency on a massive scale, and cannot impose its system and values on another people unless they actually want them. In retrospect, the US could almost certainly have done far more good spreading the same resources among the nations and peoples where they would have had real benefits, and by concentrating on the wars it actually had to fight.

At the same time, these are questions that events in Iraq may still answer in ways that give both the Coalition and the Iraqi people enough of a victory to defeat the insurgency. The right answer in future crises may never be clear, easy to choose, or be the same for different crises and problems. It is also important to emphasize, that that the lessons of Iraq are scarcely that the US should not use and improve its counterinsurgency techniques. It is rather a warning that the US and other powers should only engage directly in counterinsurgency after it assesses the costs, risks, ability to achieve the desired end objective, and alternative means honestly and in depth.

**Counterinsurgency Does Not Always Mean Winning**

There is a grimmer lesson from the evolution of the insurgency in Iraq. It is a lesson that goes firmly against the American grain, but it is a natural corollary of limited war. If the course of the political and military struggle shows the US that it cannot achieve the desired grand strategic outcome, it needs to accept the fact that the US must find ways to terminate a counterinsurgency war. Defeat, withdrawal, and acceptance of an outcome less than victory are never desirable in limited war, but they are always acceptable. For all the arguments about prestige, trust, and deterrence, there is no point in pursuing a limited conflict when it becomes more costly than the objective is worth or when the probability of achieving that objective becomes too low.

This is a lesson that goes against American culture. The whole idea that the US can be defeated is no more desirable for Americans than for anyone else, in fact, almost certainly less so. But when the US lost in Vietnam it not only lived with the reality, it ultimately did not suffer from it. When the US failed in Lebanon and Haiti, it failed at almost no perceptible cost. Exiting Somalia was not without consequences, but they were scarcely critical.

This does not mean that the US should not stay in Iraq as long as it has a good chance of achieving acceptable objectives at an acceptable cost. But, it does mean that the US can afford to lose in Iraq, particularly for reasons that are frankly beyond its control and which the world will
recognize as such. There is no point in “staying the course” through a major Iraqi civil war, a
catastrophic breakdown of the political process, or a government coming to power that simply
asks us to leave. In all three cases, it isn’t a matter of winning or losing, but instead, facing a
situation where conditions no longer exist for staying.

**Telling the Truth About Risks and the Value of Strategic Objectives**

In the future, the US will need to pay far more attention to the option of declaring that it is
fighting a limited war for limited objectives if it really is a limited war. It may well need to fully
explain what the limits to its goals and level of engagement are and develop a strategy for
implementing, communicating and exploiting these limits. One mistake is to tell the host
government, or the people you are fighting with, that your commitment is open-ended and that
you can never leave; the incentive for responsibility vanishes with it.

Similarly, if you tell the American people and the world that a marginal strategic interest is vital,
the world will sooner or later believe it, which is very dangerous if you have to leave or lose.
You are better off saying you may lose, setting limits, and then winning, than claiming that you
can’t lose, having no limits, and then losing. This should not be a massive, innovative lesson, but
it is one we simply do not seem prepared to learn.

**If the US Must Fight a Counterinsurgency Campaign, It Must Focus Firmly
on the Strategic, Political, and Allied Dimension of the Fighting**

The evolution of the insurgency in Iraq is yet another lesson in the fact that focusing on the
military dimension of war is an almost certain path to grand strategic defeat in any serious
conflict, and particularly in counterinsurgency in a weak and divided nation. If the US must
engage in counterinsurgency warfare, and sometimes it must, then it needs to plan for both the
complexity and cost of successful conflict termination and ensuring a favorable grand strategic
outcome. It must prepare for the risk of long-term engagement and escalation, civil war and
ethnic and sectarian conflict, and risks that will require more forces and resources. If such “long
wars” are too costly relative to the value of the objective, the US must set very clear limits to
what it will do based on the limited grand strategic value of the outcome and act upon them --
regardless of short-term humanitarian costs.

The US needs to prepare for, and execute, a full spectrum of conflict. That means doing much
more than seeking to win a war militarily. It needs to have the ability to make a valid and
sustainable national commitment in ideological and political terms. It must find ways of winning
broad local and regional support; stability operations and nation building are the price of any
meaningful counterinsurgency campaign.

**The US Normally Cannot Win Serious Counterinsurgency Wars Unless It Creates an Ally
and Partner Who Can Govern and Secure the Place Where the US is Fighting.**

Iraq, like so many other serious Post-WWII insurgencies, shows that successful
counterinsurgency means having or creating a local partner that can take over from US forces
and that can govern. Both Vietnam and Iraq show the US cannot win an important
counterinsurgency campaign alone. The US will always be dependent on the people in the host
country, and usually on local and regional allies. To some extent, it will be dependent on the
quality of its operations in the UN, in dealing with traditional allies and in diplomacy. If the US
can’t figure out a way to have or create such an ally, and fight under these conditions, a counterinsurgency conflict may well not be worth fighting. This means the US must do far more than creating effective allied forces. In most cases, it will have to find a way to reshape the process of politics and governments to create some structure in the country that can actually act in areas it "liberates." Pacification is the classic example. If the US or its allies can’t deploy allied police forces and government presence, the result is far often to end up with a place on the map where no one in his right mind would go at night.

**Economics and Counterinsurgency: Dollars Must Be Used as Effectively as Bullets**

The US must be prepared to use aid and civic action dollars as well as bullets, and the US military has done far better in this area in Iraq than it has in the past. Unfortunately, the history of the insurgency shows that the same cannot be said for USAID in Washington, or for any aspect of the economic planning effort under the CPA. The US ignored the economic and related political and cultural realities of nation building going into Iraq and ignores the economic realities now.

Every independent assessment of the US aid effort warns just how bad the US performance has been in these areas -- even in critical areas like the oil industry. The US has now spent or committed its way through nearly $20 billion, and has virtually no self-sustained structural economic change to show for it. Most aid projects spend more money on overhead, contractors, and security than gets to Iraqis in the field. It can’t protect most of its aid projects; for too much of post-March 2003 Iraqi economic "growth" has been illusory and comes from US waste and wartime profiteering.

Self-congratulatory measures of achievement are mindless. Who cares how much money the US spends or how many buildings it creates, unless this effort goes to the right place and has a lasting impact. The number of school buildings completed is irrelevant unless there are books, teachers, furniture, students and security, and the buildings go to troubled areas as well as secure ones. Bad or empty buildings leave a legacy of hostility, not success. Empty or low capacity clinics don’t win hearts and minds. Increasing peak power capacity is meaningless unless the right people actually get it.

**Long Wars Mean Long Plans and Long Expenditures**

The US announced on February 4th that its new Quadrennial Defense Review was based on a strategy of long wars, and an enduring conflict with terrorists and Islamist extremists. As the Iraq War and so many similar conflicts have shown, "long wars" can also take the form of long nation buildings, long stability operations, and long counter insurgencies. This means they can only be fought with patience, over a period of years, and with sustained investment in terms of US presence, military expenditures, and aid money.

In the case of Iraq, virtually every senior officer and official came to realize by 2005 that a short campaign plan had failed to prepare the US and Coalition for a meaningful effort, helped create a serious insurgency, and led to a situation that cost thousands of additional killed and wounded and meant tens of billions of addition dollars were needed to have any chance of success. Talk of major reductions in US forces moved to end-2006, and many experts talked about 2007. Most senior serving officers privately talked about a major advisory and combat support effort through 2010. A "three month" departure had turned into what threatened to be a decade-long presence if the US and its allies were to succeed. Estimates of total costs in the hundreds of billions of
dollars that senior officials in the Bush Administration had dismissed in going to war had already become a reality, and the US was well on its way to a war that would cost at least 3,000 dead and 20,000 wounded.

The message is clear. Any plan for counterinsurgency and stability operations must include years of effort, not months. Spending plans for military operations and all forms of aid must be shaped accordingly. The American tendency to begin operations with the same plan for immediate success -- "simple, quick, and wrong" -- needs to be replaced with an honest assessment of the fact that history takes time. The tendency to oversell the ease of operations, demand quick and decisive success, is a natural one for both policymakers and senior military officers. It is also a path to failure and defeat. At best, it is likely to be paid for in unnecessary body bags and billions of dollars.

**Honestly Winning the Support of the American People**

The sharp gap between the evolution of the insurgency described in the preceding analysis, and the almost endless US efforts to use the media and politics to "spin" a long and uncertain counterinsurgency campaign into turning points and instant victory, has done America, the Bush Administration, and the American military great harm. Spin and shallow propaganda loose wars rather than win them. They ultimately discredit a war, and the officials and officers who fight it.

Iraq shows that it is critical that an Administration honestly prepares the American people, the Congress and it allies for the real nature of the war to be fought. To do so, it must prepare them to sustain the expense and sacrifice through truth, not spin. But there is only so much shallow spin that the American people or Congress will take. It isn’t a matter of a cynical media or a people who oppose the war; rubbish is rubbish. If the US “spins” each day with overoptimistic statements and half-truths, it embarks on a process that will sooner or later deprive itself of credibility -- both domestically and internationally.

Iraq is also yet another warning that serious counterinsurgency campaigns often take five to fifteen years. They don’t end conveniently with an assistant secretary or a President’s term in office. Again and again we deny the sheer length of serious counterinsurgencies. Planners, executers, and anyone who explains and justifies such wars needs to be far more honest about the timescales involved, just how long we may have to stay, and that even when an insurgency is largely over, there may be years of aid and advisory efforts.

**Lessons for Warfighting**

Finally, this analysis of the insurgency raises lesson about warfighting, that go beyond the details of military strategy and tactics, and provide broader lessons that have been surprisingly consistent over the more than 40 years from Vietnam to Iraq.

- **First, warfighters must focus relentlessly on the desired outcome of the war and not simply the battle or overall military situation.** In strategic and grand strategic terms, it doesn’t matter how well the war went last month; it doesn’t matter how the US is doing tactically. The real question warfighters must ask is whether the US is actually moving toward a strategic outcome that serves the ultimate interests of the US? If warfighters don’t know, they should not spend the lives of American men and women in the first place.

The US, and any military force engaging in counterinsurgency warfare, should teach at every level that stability operations and conflict termination are the responsibility of every field-grade officer. (And, for that matter, every civilian.) Warfighters need to act on the principle that every tactical operation must have a political context and set of goals. The US needs to tie its overall campaign plan to a detailed plan for the
use of economic aid at every level, from simple bribery to actually seeking major changes in the economy of a given country.

- **Second**, warfighters need to understand, as Gen. Rupert Smith has pointed out, and as Iraq has shown, that enemies will make every effort to try to win counterinsurgency conflicts by finding ways to operate below or above the threshold of conventional military superiority. It is stupid, as some in the US military have done, to call Iraqi insurgents cowards or terrorists because they will not fight on our terms. The same remarkably stupid attitudes appeared in 19th century colonial wars and often cost those foolish enough to have them the battle. The Mahdi’s victories in the Sudan are a good case example.

The US has to be able to fight in ways that defeat insurgents and terrorists regardless of how they fight. Insurgents are not cowards for fighting us in any way that does so at the highest cost to us and the least cost to them. If they can fight below the US threshold of conventional superiority, then technology is at best a limited supplement to US human skills, military professionalism, and above all, our ability to find ways to strengthen local allies.

It is far more important, for example to have effective local forces than more technology. Net-centric is not a substitute for human-centric, and for that matter, human-centric isn’t a substitute for competent people down at the battalion level. Systems don’t win. Technology doesn’t win.

- **Third**, warfighters and their political leaders need to acknowledge that enemies can fight above the threshold of US conventional ability, not just beneath it. The character of America’s political system, culture, and values are not the answer to winning the political and ideological dimension of many counterinsurgency campaigns. There is no reason Americans should think they can win an ideological struggle over the future of Islam and/or the Arab world. Our Muslim and Arab allies, in contrast, may well be able to win this struggle, particular if the US works with them and not against them.

US public diplomacy and political actions can have a major impact in aiding counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. But, Iraq shows that the local, cultural, ethnic, religious, and political issues have to be fought out in such wars largely by our ally on the ground and other Islamic states. The US can help, but cannot win, or dominate, the battle for hearts and minds. Moreover, only regional allies with the right religion, culture, and legitimacy can cope with the growing ability of ideologically driven opponents to find the fault lines that can divide us from local allies by creating increased ethnic and sectarian tensions.

- **Fourth**, although the US does need to improve its counterinsurgency technology, it cannot win with “toys.” Technology is a tool and not a solution. Israeli technology failed in Lebanon as US technology did in Vietnam, and some of the same IED systems that helped defeat Israel have now emerged in Iraq: twin IR sensors, shaped charges, radio-controlled devices, and foam painted to look like rocks. Like Israel, the US can use technical means to defeat many IEDs, but not enough. Moreover, it is possible that the total cost of every insurgent IED to date is still lower than that cost of one AH-1S that went down over Iraq.

- **Fifth**, the force must have the right balance of numbers and expertise. Many have argued since the beginning of the Iraq War that the Coalition needed far more manpower for stability operations. This is a solution to some problems, where a simple security presence will deter terrorism and the growth of an insurgency. It is, also, however, a dangerous illusion in other cases. Large numbers of forces that will never have the right language and area skills with any serious proficiency, which lack the necessary specialist training, and have a different culture and religion will simply compound local resentments and the feeling the US or US-led force is at best an occupier and at worst an enemy. “Stabilizers” can easily become targets, and deployed large numbers of forces means more incidents with the local population, more problems in getting the host country to take responsibility, the growth of more rear-area military bureaucracy, and dealing with large number of no or little-purpose troops that need to be protected.

At the same time, too few ordinary troops can be equally dangerous, particularly in establishing initial security and presence. Small elites cannot do large or routine jobs. There must be enough military and civilians in country to establish basic security. There is no point in wasting Special Forces, translators, military police, counterinsurgency and counterterrorism experts, civil-military experts and other scarce elite forces in "presence” and "support” missions.
Finding the right balance will be difficult and case specific, and must deal with contingency risks and not simply the outcome policymakers and military planners want. The key to success is to fit the force to the case, and not to the desire or the doctrine.

Sixth, the best “force multiplier” will be effective allies, and interoperability with a true partner. If it is true that the US can win most counterinsurgency campaigns if it creates strong allies, the US must act decisively on this principle. US victories will often only be a means to this end. The real victories come when the US has allied troops that can operate against insurgents in the field, and a friendly government to carry out nation building and civil action activities at the same time. The US really begins to win when it can find ways to match the military, political, economic, and governance dimension.

Creating a real partnership with allies also means respect; it doesn’t mean creating proxies or tools. It means recognizing that creating the conditions for effective governance and police are as important as the military. So is the creation of effective ministries. Iraq shows all too clearly that this kind of warfare, if you focus on the ministry of defense and ignore the ministry of the interior or the ministry of finance, just doesn’t work.

In most places, the actual counterinsurgency battle is local and as dependent on police and effective governance as effective military forces. In hyper-urbanized areas, which represent many of the places where we fight, the city is the key, at least as much as the national government. Incidentally, Iraq has already shown time after time that it is difficult to sustain any victory without a lasting presence by local police and government offices.

Seventh, political legitimacy in counterinsurgency is measured in local terms and not in terms of American ideology. Effective warfighting means the US must recognize something about regional allies that goes against its present emphasis on “democracy.” In most of the world, “legitimacy” has little to do with governments being elected, and a great deal to do with governments being popular.

By all means, hold elections when they do more good than harm. But bringing the people security, the rule of law, human rights, and effective governance is far more important. In many cases, elections may be disruptive or bring people to power that are more of a problem than a solution. This is particularly true if elections come without the preconditions of mature political parties, economic stability, a firm rule of law, and checks and balances. In most cases, the US and its allies will still need to worry about the people who don’t win—people, ethnicities, and sects who will not have human rights protection. (If anyone thinks there is a correlation between democracy and human rights, congratulations, they got through college without ever reading Thucydides. The Melian dialogue is the historical rule, not the exception.)

Eighth, the US needs to have a functional interagency process and partner our military with effective civilian counterparts. Iraq has shown that political leaders and senior military cannot afford to bypass the system, or to lack support from the civilian agencies that must do their part from the outset. The US needs to begin by deciding on the team it needs to go to war, and then make that team work. It is one of the oddities historically that Robert McNamara got his largest increase in US troops deployed to Vietnam by bypassing the interagency process. The Bush Administration began by going through an interagency process before the war, but largely chose to ignore it after January of 2003.

This is the wrong approach. Counterinsurgency wars are as much political and economic as military. They require political action, aid in governance, economic development and attention to the ideological and political dimension. The US can only succeed here if the interagency process can work.

At another level, the US needs civilian risk-takers. It needs a counterpart to the military in the field. There is no point in supporting the staffing of more interagency coordination bodies in Washington unless their primary function is to put serious resources into the field. The US is not going to win anything by having better interagency coordination and more meetings, unless the end result is to put the right mix of people and resources out in the countryside where the fighting takes place.

The US needs to put a firm end to the kind of mentality that overstaff the State Department and intelligence community in Washington, and doesn’t require career civilians to take risks in the field. Foreign Service officers should not be promoted, in fact should be selected out, unless they are willing to take risks. The US can get all of the risk takers we want. There already is a flood of applications from qualified people. It can also ensure continuity and expertise by drawing on the brave group of people already in Iraq and
Afghanistan -- a remarkable number of whom are already contract employees -- and giving them career status.

In the process, the US also needs to “civilianize” some aspects of its military. It needs to improve both their area and language skills, create the added specialized forces it needs for stability and nation building operations, and rethink tour length for military who work in critical positions and with allied forces. Personal relationships are absolutely critical in the countries where the US is most likely to fight counterinsurgency wars. So is area expertise and continuity in intelligence.

Counterinsurgency needs a core of military and civilians who will accept 18 month to 24-month tours in key slots. The problem today is often that the selection system does not focus on the best person but rather on external personnel and career planning considerations. Moreover, it fails to recognize that those who take such additional risks should be paid for it in full, and be given different leave policies and promotion incentives. Today, a soldier that is only a battalion commander is only a battalion commander. The key officers are those with area and counterinsurgency skills that go beyond the combat unit level. Those officers need to have more diverse skills, and deal adequately with the broader dimension of war, and stay long enough to be fully effective.

Finally, human-centric warfare does not mean "super-soldiers" or super-intelligence officers. Military forces -- and the civilian support needed for stability operations, nation building, and counterinsurgency -- do need better training in the nature of such operations, local languages, and local cultures. But, military forces and civilians that are outstanding is a dangerous illusion. Effective operations require both adequate force quality and adequate force quantity, and the understanding that most people are, by definition, "average." Elites are an essential part of military operations, but only a part.

This demand for elites and super-intelligence officers is a particular problem for warfighting intelligence, given the limits of today's technical systems and means. It is also a problem because Iraq shows that developing effective US-led and organized HUMINT may often be impossible.

It is true that better intelligence analysis and HUMINT are critical. But, there will be many times in the future where we will also have to go into counterinsurgency campaigns without being able to put qualified Americans in the field quickly enough to recruit effective agents and develop effective HUMINT on our own.

Does that mean HUMINT isn’t important? Of course it doesn’t; it is a useful tool. But to create effective HUMINT abilities to deal with security issues, the US will need an effective local partner in most serious cases of both counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. Having allied countries, allied forces, or allied elements, develop effective HUMINT will be a critical answer to US shortcomings.
Table of Contents

I. INTRODUCTION ....................................................................................................................................................1

SADDAM HUSSEIN’S “POWDER KEG”........................................................................................................................2
AMERICA’S STRATEGIC MISTAKES ...........................................................................................................................4
Failure at the Grand Strategic Level .........................................................................................................................4
Failures Before and During the War ........................................................................................................................5
Failures After the Fall of Saddam Hussein ...........................................................................................................9
Failures From June 2004 to the Present ................................................................................................................11


DENIAL AS A METHOD OF COUNTER-INSURGENCY WARFARE ..............................................................................15
BASELINE/POST-CONFLICT: 1 MAY 2003 – FALL 2003 ............................................................................................17
THE INSURGENCY BECOMES SERIOUS: FALL TO END 2003 ................................................................................18
SERIOUS FIGHTING IN THE PRE-TRANSFER OF POWER PERIOD: WINTER-SPRING 2004 ....................................19
PRE-SOVEREIGNITY: 1 APRIL – 28 JUNE 2004 .......................................................................................................20
EARLY SOVEREIGNTY: 29 JUNE – 26 NOVEMBER 2004 ..............................................................................................20
Shifts in the Nature of the Insurgency .......................................................................................................................21
More Attacks on Iraqis .............................................................................................................................................22
Estimating the Impact of the Insurgency through October 2004 ...........................................................................23
THE COURSE OF THE INSURGENCY IN EARLY 2005 .............................................................................................24
The Uncertain Impact of the January 30, 2005 Election .......................................................................................25
A New Resurgence of Sectarian Violence ..............................................................................................................26
Warnings that Iraqi Forces Could Feed the Insurgency .......................................................................................28
The Overall Trends in the Insurgency During 2004 ...............................................................................................31
A NEW RISE IN THE VIOLENCE -- POST-SOVEREIGNTY: APRIL 28, 2005-OCTOBER 14, 2005 ..............................33
A Shi’ite-Kurdish Government Becomes a Natural Target ...................................................................................34
Warnings About Iraqi Forces and the Ministry of Interior ...................................................................................37
COALITION AND IRAQI GOVERNMENT CAMPAIGNS IN THE SUMMER AND WINTER OF 2005 ..............................37
OPERATION IRON FIST, RIVER GATE AND STEEL CURTAIN (OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER 2005) ................................41
THE PERIOD BEFORE THE ELECTIONS: OCTOBER 15, 2005-DECEMBER 15, 2005 ..................................................42
THE DECEMBER 15 ELECTION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE INSURGENCY .......................................................44
POST-ELECTION: PRELUDE TO INCREASED VIOLENCE .........................................................................................50
The Attack on the Askariya Shrine and the Increase of Low-Level Civil Conflict ..................................................52
Sectarian Cleansing and Internal Displacement .....................................................................................................58
US-Iraq Campaigns in Early 2006 .........................................................................................................................61
The Impact of Problems in Creating a National Unity Government ......................................................................64

III. A NEW IRAQI GOVERNMENT FINALLY APPEARS: SUMMER 2006 .................................................................70

Key Appointments: Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior, National Security Advisor ........................................71
AL-MALIKI’S PROGRAM ............................................................................................................................................71
Working Toward National Reconciliation .............................................................................................................73
Skirting the Issues .................................................................................................................................................74
Bringing Sunni Insurgents On-Board .....................................................................................................................75
Differences Unravel .................................................................................................................................................75
Growing Divides: Talk of Segregating the Country ............................................................................................76
HEIGHTENED SECTARIAN AND ETHNIC VIOLENCE ..............................................................................................80
Stepped up Security Efforts in Baghdad ................................................................................................................81
Deadly Reprisal Attacks ........................................................................................................................................85
The Ominous Question of Civil War .....................................................................................................................86
Internal Displacement ...........................................................................................................................................88

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X. OTHER SUNNI ARAB INSURGENT GROUPS: THE “NATIONALISTS”?

Planning Before, During, and Immediately After the War .......................................................... 418
The Mottives of the More “Nationalist” Insurgents ....................................................................... 418
Ba’thists, Non-Ba’thists, or Semi-Ba’thists? ................................................................................. 420
Other “Nationalist” Sunni Insurgents .............................................................................................. 423
The Search for Power and the Possibility of Dialogue ................................................................. 423

TENSIONS AND CLASHES BETWEEN SUNNI “NATIONALISTS” VERSUS SUNNI “ISLAMIC EXTREMISTS” ........................................... 424
Divisions Over Playing a Role in the Political Process ................................................................. 425
Iraqi Government Negotiations with “Nationalist” Insurgents ..................................................... 428

The Role of Sunni Arab Militias .................................................................................................. 430
The Positive Side of the Militia Story ............................................................................................. 432
The Negative Side ....................................................................................................................... 433

XI. ASSESSING THE FUTURE POTENTIAL OF THE SUNNI INSURGENCY ........................................... 437

The “Nationalist” Need for Compromise .................................................................................... 437
The “Islamist” Need for Civil War ............................................................................................... 437

XII. THE ISSUE OF FOREIGN VOLUNTEERS .................................................................................. 439

The Uncertain Number, Source, and Role of Foreign Volunteers ............................................... 439
Number and National Origin of Foreign Volunteers .................................................................... 441
Saudi Militants in Iraq: A Case Study ......................................................................................... 444
Syria and Foreign Volunteers ..................................................................................................... 446
Iran and Foreign Volunteers ....................................................................................................... 448

XIII. THE UNCERTAIN STATUS OF THE SHI’ITES ........................................................................ 449

Shi’ite Factions and the Various Militias .................................................................................... 449
The Role of the Badr Organization .............................................................................................. 453
The Role of Moqtada Al-Sadr ....................................................................................................... 453
The Rise and Temporary Fall of the Mahdi Militia ...................................................................... 454
Resurgence in 2005 .................................................................................................................. 455
Sadr, the December 2005 Elections, and the New Government .................................................. 456
Sadr and the Attack on the Askariya Shrine ................................................................................ 457
Relationship with External Forces ............................................................................................... 458
The Rising Threat of Shi’ite Militias Over the Summer of 2006 .................................................. 458
Sadr, the Mahdi Army, and Civil War: An Evolution 2004-2007 ............................................... 461
Internal Shi’ite Divisions: 2003-2007 .......................................................................................... 467
Death Squads and Mystery Killings ............................................................................................... 472
Links to the Iraqi Police and Special Security Forces ................................................................. 473
Iraqi Government Efforts to “Solve” the Militia Problem ............................................................. 481
Insurgent Pressure on the Shi’ites to Move Toward Civil War .................................................... 483
Accelerating Violence in 2005 .................................................................................................... 484
Violence in 2006 ........................................................................................................................ 486

XIV. THE KURDS AND OTHER MINORITIES .............................................................................. 489

Kurdish Parties and the Kurdish Militias ..................................................................................... 489
Tensions Between the Kurds and Other Iraqis ............................................................................ 490
Uncertain Kurdish Unity ............................................................................................................ 495
The Problem of Resources and Oil .............................................................................................. 497
The “Other Iraq”? ....................................................................................................................... 498
The Turkish Question ................................................................................................................ 498

XV. THE ROLE OF OUTSIDE STATES IN THE INSURGENCY .................................................. 502

Creating a “Shi’ite Crescent”? .................................................................................................... 505
The Views of the Arab Gulf States .............................................................................................. 506
A Clash within a Civilization? ...................................................................................................... 508

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Table of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II.1</td>
<td>Illustrative Patterns in Targeting and Casualties: September 2003-October 2004</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.2</td>
<td>Insurgent Attacks by Key Target: January 2004-January 2005</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.3</td>
<td>The Key Urban Areas in the Insurgency</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.4</td>
<td>December 2005 Election Results: Composition of the Council of Representatives</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.5</td>
<td>Election Results, January and December 2005</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.6</td>
<td>Percentage of Vote Won by Four Major Coalition Parties in Each of Iraq’s 18 Provinces</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.7</td>
<td>Total Attacks By Province: February 11, 2006 – May 12, 2006</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.8</td>
<td>Separating Iraq Along Sectarian Lines – Regional Breakdown, June 2006</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.9</td>
<td>Concern of Civil War: November 2005-August 2006</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.10</td>
<td>How Concerned Are You that Civil War May Break Out in Iraq? Breakdown of Provinces, November 2005 and October 2006</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.11</td>
<td>Number of Internally Displaced Families by Province/Major Cities: Comparison of December 2005 and October 2006</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.12</td>
<td>The Refugee/Internally Displaced Person Crisis in Iraq, 2007</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.13</td>
<td>The Unready Judges the Unready: Provincial Security Transition Team Assessment</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.15</td>
<td>Oil Production, Million of Barrels per Day: May-November 2006</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.16</td>
<td>Average Daily Hours of Electrical Power per Province, October 2006</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.17</td>
<td>Iraq Average Hours Electricity Received, December 2006-January 2007</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.1</td>
<td>Total Average Weekly Attacks versus Effective Attacks by Time Period: February 2004 – November 2005</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.2</td>
<td>Attacks by Iraqi Governorate or Province: August 29, 2005 to January 20, 2006</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.3</td>
<td>Daily Attacks per Capita by Province: February 11, 2006-May 12, 2006</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.4</td>
<td>Approximate Number of Major Attacks per Month: June 2003-February 2005</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.5</td>
<td>Average Weekly Attacks by Time Period: January 2004 – November 2006</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.6</td>
<td>Total Attacks by Province: May-November 2006</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.7</td>
<td>Average Significant Attacks in Major Iraqi Cities September 2005-November 2006</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.9</td>
<td>Ethno-Sectarian Incidents and Executions, January – October 2006</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.10</td>
<td>Patterns of IED Attacks: January 2004 to October 2005</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.11</td>
<td>Cumulative Summary of IED attacks and IEDs found in Baghdad, 2006</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.12</td>
<td>US IED Deaths: July 2003 to November 2006</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.13</td>
<td>Percent of All IEDs Intercepted/Defused</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.14</td>
<td>Patterns in Car Bombings and Suicide Bombings: May-October 2005 – Part One</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.15</td>
<td>Patterns in Car Bombings and Suicide Bombings: May – October 2005 – Part Two</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.18</td>
<td>Iraq Oil Fields and Pipelines</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.19</td>
<td>Average Monthly Attacks on Infrastructure by Time Period</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.20</td>
<td>Average Weekly Attacks on Infrastructure by Time Period: January 1, 2004 – August 11, 2006</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.21</td>
<td>Casualty Patterns in Iraqi and Coalition Forces over Time</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.22</td>
<td>Coalition Deaths By Month and Nationality: March 2003 to January 2007</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.23</td>
<td>Coalition Casualties by Iraqi Governorate or Province</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.27</td>
<td>Iraqi Fatalities by City: March 2003-February 2005</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Map V.1: Ethnic Distribution and Political Boundaries ................................................................. 354
Map VI.1: Tribes and Subtribes of Iraq ........................................................................................... 431
The author would like to thank Patrick Baetjer, Eric Brewer, Emma Davies, William Elliott, Hania Kronfol, Sara Moller, George Sullivan, William Sullivan, and Anna Wittman, whose research assistance made this effort possible.
I. Introduction

The rising insurgency in Iraq has become a “war after the war” that threatens to divide Iraq and thrust it into full-scale civil war. It dominates the struggle to reshape Iraq as a modern state, has become a growing threat to the Gulf Region, and has become linked to the broader struggle between Sunni and Shi’ite Islamist extremism and moderation and reform throughout the Islamic world.

In military terms, the insurgency has evolved into war of attrition that has now produced ten times as many Coalition casualties as the fight to topple the Regime and defeat Iraq’s army. It has also become a conflict designed to plunge the nation in sectarian and ethnic violence, and one that has created a serious risk of civil war. It is a conflict with no clear end and which can either gradually fade if the Iraqi political process and development of Iraqi forces succeeds; or suddenly divide the country in ways that no amount of Coalition effort may be able to avoid.

Many factions now threaten Iraqi security and stability. The insurgency is currently dominated, however, by Sunni Islamist extremists who oppose any negotiations or arrangement with the new Iraqi government and compromise with Coalition forces. These extremists now focus more on attacking Shi’ites, Kurds, and those Sunnis who support the new government or who might participate in the political process than on Coalition forces. Nonetheless, they still attack Coalition, diplomatic, NGO, and other non-Iraqi targets. They are seeking to force the US and its allies to withdraw from Iraq, and to defeat them through a war of attrition, but their primary goal is to prevent Iraq from emerging as unified national state dominated by a Shi’ite majority.

At the same time, sectarian and ethnic violence has come to rival the insurgency in terms of casualties and the threat it poses to political, social, and economic progress in Iraq. Shi’ite militias and death squads reply to the insurgency in kind, often killing, wounding, or kidnapping innocent Sunnis. Neighborhoods forces both protect and threat. Ethnic cleansing is forcing many Iraqis to relocate into areas where they are in the sectarian or ethnic majority or flee the country. Shi’ite and Kurdish elements in the security forces and police have joined in the pattern of revenge and violence.

The end result is that there is less and less difference between insurgency and civil war, and all sides are to some extent guilty of terrorism. The fighting in Iraq has evolved over time in ways that increase the risk of intense or full-scale civil war. Its now driven by sectarian and ethnic struggles, rather than national movements and causes, and in some cases by internal struggles for power within the same sect, which is the case of the Shi’ites in Basra. In other cases, like Kirkuk, the struggle is between Kurds, Arabs, and other minorities, with little role by the Sunni insurgents.

This report provides an overview of both how the Iraqi insurgency has moved towards civil conflict from its inception in the spring of 2003 through the first half of 2006, of the ways in which insurgent tactics and methods have changed over time, and the current level of civil conflict and risk of overall civil war. It is divided into five general sections.

- The first section examines Iraq under the rule of Saddam, the immediate post-war aftermath and the development of a violent insurgency in the spring and summer of 2003. It chronicles the insurgency’s inception and how it has evolved from 2003 until 2006 and examines Coalition operations to counter it.
• The second evaluates insurgent patterns of attacks, and Coalition and Iraqi casualties. It also examines insurgent tactics, methods of attack, and the political, psychological and informational warfare lessons from 2003-2006.

• The third section assesses the composition of the insurgency including Iraqi Sunni Arabs (both “Islamists and “Nationalists”), foreign jihadists, and the uncertain status of the Shi’ites. It also addresses the degree to which these factions cooperate or conflict and the role of Iraqi’s neighbors in the insurgency.

• The fourth considers Iraqi views of the threat.

• The fifth and final section offers an assessment of probable outcomes of the conflict and lessons of the war.

Saddam Hussein’s “Powder keg”

The Coalition must take much of the blame for the way the insurgency has unfolded, bit it seems almost certain but the fall of Saddam Hussein would have exposed deep fracture lines in Iraq, almost regardless of how it occurred. Arab Sunni rule over an Arab Shi’ite majority is a key legacy of both the Ottoman Empire and the British “divide and rule” tactics that formed the Iraqi state. The forced inclusion of the Kurds in Iraq, British suppression of a largely Shi'ite rebellion, and the British choice of an expatriate Sunni monarch helped reinforce Sunni control at the expense of the Shi'ites and Kurds. So did the violent suppression of repeated Kurdish uprisings

Iraq’s violent politics further compounded these problems. Although Shi'ites and Kurds did play a role in Iraq's post monarchy politics, most power struggles were between rival Sunni elites. The defeat of yet another Kurdish rebellion in the mid-1970s helped cement suppression of rival sectarian and ethnic factions by force. So did Saddam's rise to power. He never tolerated political dissent in any form, and began the bloody purging and suppression of all organized political resistance when he took full power in 1979.

Under Saddam, Iraq came to be ruled by a small, largely rural Sunni Arab elite that used the Ba’ath Party and the state to maintain itself in power. Its economy remained relatively undeveloped; agriculture was never properly modernized or made productive, inefficient state-industries undercut development, as did a rigid state-controlled financial sector and a mix of barriers to trade and outside investment. Worse, the economy effectively became a command kleptocracy where Saddam Hussein used the nation’s wealth to secure power and support his ambitions, and his ruling elite exploited their positions for their own personal benefit.

The nation was impoverished and driven into massive debt in the early 1980s by Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Iran and effort to seize its oil-rich territory in the southwest of Iran. While most of Iraq's Shi'ites and many of its Kurds remained loyal to the government, some did not. Shi’ite dissidents were ruthlessly punished, and the Kurds whose loyalty was uncertain or tilted towards Iran were attacked, relocated, and often killed. Many Kurdish and Shi'ite conscripts were assigned to Iraq's low grade infantry units, often acting as little more than a forward defensive shield for Iraq's Republican Guards and main regular army units.

The politics of the Iran-Iraq War, which lasted from 1980-1988, were essentially the politics of ruthless repression. Political dissent of any kind became even more dangerous. Kurdish efforts to exploit the war and achieve some degree of autonomy or independence were met with murder, the use of poison gas, and “ethnic cleansing.” Hundreds of thousands of Arab Shi’ites were driven out of the country, and many formed an armed opposition with Iranian support. While most of the remaining Arab Shi’ites remained loyal, their secular and religious leaders were kept under constant surveillance and sometimes imprisoned and killed. The marsh areas along the
Iranian border were a key center of the fighting between Iran and Iraq, but still became a sanctuary for deserters and Shi’ite opposition elements.

Eight years of war crippled the development of the nation’s economy, infrastructure, education, and efforts to properly develop its oil wealth. In the process, Shi’ite and Kurdish regions took far more serious cuts in civil spending than the major cities and "loyal" Sunni areas.

In 1990, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in efforts to solve his economic problems by seizing its oil resources. The result was the Gulf War, a massive military defeat, and a new burden of reparations for the war, and then to more than a decade of UN and international sanctions further crippling every aspect of the nation’s development.

Iraq’s defeat in the Gulf War in 1991, following its invasion of Kuwait in 1990, did more than further impoverish the country. Uprisings in the Shi’ite areas in the south were suppressed with all of the regime’s customary violence and then followed by a mix of repression and low-level civil war that lasted until Saddam was driven from power. While this conflict received only limited attention from the outside world, it often involved significant local clashes between Iraqi government forces and those of Shi’ite opposition movements based in, and backed by, Iran. The post-Iraq War discovery of mass graves of Shi’ite fighters and civilians are a grim testimony to how serious this “quiet” fighting could be. This further divided Shi’ite and Sunni and also left a lasting legacy of anger against the US and Britain for not supporting the uprisings against Saddam and protecting the Shi’ites.

A similar set of uprisings in the Kurdish north created a flood of refugees into Turkey following the defeat of the Kurds. This forced the US to use airpower to protect the Kurds, and create an international aid effort to support them. This gave the Kurds a level of protection the Arab Shi’ites lacked, but left them in a kind of limbo where they had de facto autonomy, but lived with nearly one-third of Iraq’s military forces deployed on the edge of their “security zone.” Divisions between the two main Kurdish factions led to low-level fighting and even to one faction supporting an attack by Saddam on the other. The end result, however, was to further increase the Kurdish desire for independence, while keeping many dispossessed Kurds out of their original homes in areas like Kirkuk and Mosul.

From 1991 until the Coalition invasion in 2003, Saddam Hussein created further problems by encouraging tribal divisions and favoring those tribes and clans that supported his rule and regime. He exploited religion by increasingly publicly embracing Islam, and privately favoring Sunni factions and religious leaders that supported him while penalizing Shi’ite religious leaders and centers he saw as a threat. At the same time, funds were poured into Sunni areas in the West, government and security jobs were given to Sunnis, and scarce resources went into military industries that heavily favored Sunni employment. The result was to distort the economy and urban structure of Iraq in ways that favored Sunni towns and cities in areas like Tikrit, Samarra, Fallujah, Ramadi and other largely loyalist Sunni towns.

Saddam Hussein’s regime manipulated rationing, control of imports, and state funds. Saddam corrupted the UN oil for food program for his own benefit, further undercutting economic development, causing serious human hardship, and crippling part of the country’s infrastructure and medical services.

The funding of education, medical services, and infrastructure was used as a political weapon in an effort to exploit the suffering of the Iraqi people to break out of UN sanctions. Revenues were
used selectively to favor key power centers like Baghdad, and major potential centers of urban unrest, while leaving other areas with limited or no essential services like water, power, and sewers.

Rather than seek to restore and develop the nation’s oil and gas wealth, existing fields were overproduced, funds were redirected for the use of the regime, and exports were manipulated to obtain kickbacks and get political support from nations like Syria. These efforts were cloaked by a propaganda campaign blaming the US, UN, outside powers, and UN sanctions for all of the mistakes of the regime.

Iraq's ethnic and sectarian fracture lines were rarely openly apparent, but tensions between the Sunni-dominated ruling elite and the Shi'ites and Kurds became steadily worse. The gaps between the elite and ordinary Iraqi also worsened, and much of the middle class was impoverished. By comparison, Tito’s regime in the former Yugoslavia was both progressive and benign. At the time the US-led coalition invaded, Iraq was divided by far greater pressures, and had far less capability for political leadership. It was a time bomb waiting to explode, fueled by both its original heritage of ethnic and sectarian division and by over twenty years of direct misrule by Saddam Hussein.

**America’s Strategic Mistakes**

The United States made major strategic mistakes in preparing to deal with this situation. It did demonstrate that it could fight the war it planned to fight: a conventional regional war with remarkable efficiency, at low cost, and very quickly. The problem was that it focused on conventional warfare, and driving Saddam from power.

The US failed to realistically plan for, and then execute the other phases of war: conflict termination, stability operations, and nation building. The US chose a strategy whose post-conflict goals were unrealistic and impossible to achieve, and failed to plan for the real nature of “peace” that was certain to follow.

The impact of these failures was compounded after Saddam's fall when it became apparent to Iraqis and the world that the basic rationale for going to war was based on false intelligence estimates and Iraqi efforts to create weapons of mass destruction did not exist.

**Failure at the Grand Strategic Level**

The worst mistakes, however, were made at the grand strategic level. The Bush Administration and the senior leadership of the US military made the far more serious mistake of wishing away virtually all of the real world problems in stability operations and nation building, and making massive policy and military errors that created much of the climate that allowed the insurgency in Iraq to emerge.

In *Cobra II*, Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor write that there “was a direct link between the way the Iraq War was planned and the bitter insurgency the American-led coalition subsequently confronted. The ambitious plans that the president announced to transform American defense proved to be at odds with his bold plan to transform a region.”

Too much credence was given to ideologues and true believers in the ease with which such a war could be fought and in effective nation building. These included leading neoconservatives in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Office of the Vice President, and some officials in the
National Security Council, as well as in several highly politicized “think tanks.” The same was true of various Iraqi exile groups that grossly exaggerated the level of Iraqi popular support for a “liberating” invasion, the ease with which Saddam Hussein’s regime could be replaced, and underestimated both the scale of Iraqi’s ethnic and sectarian divisions and economic problems.

These problems were compounded by leadership within the Office of the Secretary of Defense that put intense pressure on the US military to plan for the lowest possible level of US military deployment, and then for delays in that deployment because of the political need to avoid appearing precipitous to the UN. At the same time, the leadership of the US military actively resisted planning for, and involvement in, large-scale and enduring stability and nation building activity, and failed to plan and deploy for the risk of a significant insurgency.

**Failures Before and During the War**

The situation was made worse by the fact the US made major mistakes in planning the Iraq War, and in failing to plan for stability operations, conflict termination, and nation building. America chose a strategy whose goals were unrealistic and impossible to achieve, and only planned for the war it wanted to fight and not for uncertainty and the problems in stability operations and nation building that were almost certain to follow. In *The Assassins’ Gate*, George Packer comments on how US forces were unprepared for the growth and resilience of the insurgency they confronted following the toppling of Saddam Hussein. According to Packer’s account, phase IV—or post-war operations in Iraq, was perceived as an after-thought by the Bush Administration, rather than a primary objective. Consequently, Washington turned a blind eye to developments on the ground, and was to slow to react to an evolving, and potentially fatal, resistance force. Describing the ramifications of this shortsightedness, Packer wrote:

> …in Washington there had been no plan for a guerrilla war; a guerrilla war would change all the calculations about the military presence in Iraq; and so there was no guerrilla war. On the ground in Iraq, the consequences of this willful blindness were as real and dire as the months or even years of delay in supplies of armored vehicles and body armor reaching American forces whose “operations tempo” was increasing every week. After the Army ordered more bulletproof vests, it took almost half for the first shipment to reach Iraq. By December 2003, Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, the top US Commander in Iraq, was writing to Pentagon that the shortage of spare parts and other equipment was so severe that “I cannot continue to support combat operations with rates this low.

The full chronology of what happened in US planning and operations before, during, and immediately after the fight to drive Saddam Hussein from power is still far from clear. It is now much easier to make accusations than it is to understand what really happened or assign responsibility with credibility. It is clear, however, that many of the key decisions involved were made in ways that bypassed the interagency process within the US government, ignored the warnings of US area and intelligence experts, ignored prior military war and stability planning by the US Central Command (USCENTCOM), and ignored the warnings of policy makers and experts in other key coalition states like the United Kingdom.

During the invasion and the battles that drove Saddam Hussein from power, the US demonstrated that it could fight the war it planned to fight -- a conventional regional war -- with remarkable efficiency, at low cost, and very quickly. At the same time, too much credence was given to ideologues and true believers, and little attention was paid to the problems that would arise once Saddam fell from power.
Leading neoconservatives in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Office of the Vice President, and some officials in the National Security Council, as well as in several highly politicized “think tanks,” assumed that Iraq would preserve virtually all of its existing government, require little more than the toppling of a dictator, be wealthy enough to carry out its own development, and would not present major internal security problems like ethnic and sectarian conflicts. This lack of realism was compounded by various Iraqi exile groups that grossly exaggerated the level of Iraqi popular support for a “liberating” invasion and the ease with which Saddam Hussein’s regime could be replaced, and underestimated both the scale of Iraq’s ethnic and sectarian divisions and economic problems.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense put intense pressure on the US military to plan for the lowest possible level of US military deployment. It assumed it would get access to Turkey for an American invasion from the north that Turkey did not approve, and delayed some deployments because of the political need to avoid appearing precipitous to the UN. At the same time, the leadership of the US military actively resisted planning for, and involvement in, large-scale and enduring stability and nation-building activity, and failed to plan and deploy for the risk of a significant insurgency.

- **Inaccurate threat estimates that created a false rationale for war.** US and British intelligence made major errors in estimating the level of Iraq’s programs to develop weapons of mass destruction and delivery systems. Such errors were in many ways the outgrowth of Iraq’s history of lies and concealment efforts, but still produced estimates far less accurate than those of UN inspection teams. These errors were compounded by efforts to spin intelligence indicators and analyses to support the private and public case for war. Lesser errors were made in exaggerating the importance of peripheral Iraqi intelligence contacts with terrorist groups, and the role of Ansar al-Islam. The resulting focus on weapons of mass destruction and terrorism seems to have helped lead the US to underestimate the importance of Phase IV or stability operations.

- **Diplomatic estimates that exaggerated probable international support and the ability to win an allied and UN consensus.** The US and Britain initially planned for far more support from their allies and the UN than they received. It was assumed that allies like France and Germany could be persuade to go along with the US and British position, that UN inspectors would valid US and British concerns regarding Iraqi concealment of weapons of mass destruction, and that they could win the support of the Security Council. In practice, none of these estimates proved correct, and the US and Britain found themselves moving towards war in an unexpectedly adversarial diplomatic position.

- **Over-reliance on exile groups with limited credibility and influence in Iraq.** US and British plans to preserve cadres of friendly Ba’ath officials and Iraqi forces proved to by illusory. The exile groups the US dealt with grossly exaggerated their influence and understanding of Iraq, while the exile groups that did have significant influence were largely Shi’ite religious groups with ties to Iran and independent militias. The result was both strong pressures to push secular officials and military out of the political system even if they had no serious ties to Saddam Hussein, and to help polarize Iraq’s sectarian and ethnic divisions.

- **Broader failures in intelligence and analysis of the internal political and economic structure of Iraq: Failures that a leading intelligence expert involved in planning operations in Iraq said were the result of “quiescent US military and Intelligence community leaders who observed the distortion/cherry picking of data that lead to erroneous conclusions and poor planning,” but failed to press their case or force the issue.**

- **Inability to accurately assess the nature of Iraqi nationalism, the true level of culture differences, and the scale of Iraq’s problems.** This failure in strategic assessment included the failure to see the scale of Iraq’s ethnic and sectarian differences, its economic weaknesses and problems, the difficulty of modernizing an infrastructure sized more to 16-17 million people rather than the current population of 27-28 million, unrealistic estimates of “oil wealth,” the probable hardcore support for the former regime in Sunni areas, secular versus theocratic tensions, the impact of tribalism, the impact of demographics in a society so
young and with so many employment problems, and a host of other real-world problems that became US and Coalition problems the moment Coalition forces crossed the border.

- **Overoptimistic plans for internal Iraqi political and military support.** The full details are not yet public, but the US expected more Iraqi military units to be passive or even welcome the Coalition, and at least one leading Iraqi official to openly turn against Saddam Hussein.

- **The failure to foresee sectarian and ethnic conflict:** Somewhat amazingly -- given its problems in Lebanon, Somalia, and the Balkans -- the US did not plan for major tensions and divisions between Arab, Kurd, and other minorities. It did not plan for the contingency of tension and fighting between religious Sunnis, religious Shi‘ites, and more secular Iraqis. For all of its talk about Saddam’s links to terrorism, it did not plan for attacks and infiltration by Islamist extremists into a post-Saddam Iraq.

- **Failure to anticipate the threat of insurgency and outside extremist infiltration, in spite of significant intelligence warning, and to deploy elements of US forces capable of dealing with counterinsurgency, civil-military operations, and nation building as US forces advanced and in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the regime.** Creating regional commands based on administrative convenience, rather than need, and leaving most of the initial tasks of stability operations and nation building up to improvisation by individual local commanders who had minimal or no expert civilian support.

- **Rejection of the importance of stability operations and nation building before, during, and immediately after the war.** Policymakers and many military commanders sought a quick war without the complications and problems of a prolonged stability or Phase IV effort, and without the commitment and expense of nation building. Many policymakers saw such efforts as both undesirable and unnecessary. US commanders saw them as a “trap” forcing the long-term commitment of US troops that should be avoided if possible.

- **Shortfalls in US military strength and capability to provide the personnel and skills necessary to secure Iraqi rear areas and urban areas as the Coalition advanced, and to prevent the massive looting of government offices and facilities, military bases, and arms depots as the during and after the fighting.** The inability to secure key centers of gravity and rear areas helped create a process of looting that effectively destroyed the existing structure of governance and security.

- **Planning for premature US military withdrawals from Iraq before the situation was clear or secure,** with major reductions initially planned to begin some three months after the fall of Saddam’s regime, rather than planning, training, and equipping for a sustained period of stability operations.

- **Inability to execute a key feature of the war plan by miscalculating Turkey’s willingness to allow the deployment of US forces and transit through Turkey.** A lean US troop deployment in the original war plan could not be executed because Turkey did not allow the basing and transit of either US ground troops or aircraft. A reinforced division had to be omitted from the war plan, and the US lacked the kind of presence that might have occupied and stabilized North Iraq and the Sunni triangle.

- **Failure to anticipate and prepare for Iraqi expectations after the collapse of Saddam’s regime,** and for the fact that many Iraqis would oppose the invasion and see any sustained US and Coalition presence as a hostile occupation.

- **A failure to plan and execute effective and broadly based information operations before, during, and after the invasion to win the “hearts and minds of Iraqis.**” The US did not persuade Iraqis that the Coalition came as liberators that would leave rather than as occupiers who would stay and exploit Iraq, and that the Coalition would provide aid and support to a truly independent government and state. A secondary failure to anticipate and defuse the flood of conspiracy theories certain to follow Coalition military action.

- **Failure to react to the wartime collapse of Iraqi military, security, and police forces and focus immediately on creating effective Iraqi forces --** a failure that placed a major and avoidable burden on US and other coalition forces and compounded the Iraqi feeling that Iraq had been occupied by hostile forces.

- **Lack of effective planning for economic aid and reconstruction.** While some efforts were made to understand the scale of the economic problems that had developed in Iraq since the early years of the Iran-
Iraq War, the US initially operated on the assumption that Iraq was an oil-rich country that could quickly recover with a change in leadership. There was little understanding of just how far short every aspect of Iraq’s infrastructure fell short of current needs, and of the problems that would arise in trying to construct adequate facilities and services. The problems in Iraq’s state industries received only limited attention, particularly the importance of its military industries. Weaknesses in its agricultural sector were also misunderstood. The US did correctly understand many of the limits in its financial sector, but was unprepared to deal with virtually all of the realities of an economy that had effectively become a “command kleptocracy.”

- **Initial lack of a major aid program for stability operations:** Before and during the war, the US planned for two sets of economic problems, neither of which occurred. One was a major attempt to burn Iraq’s oil field, and the second was the risk of a major collapse in the oil for food program. There was no serious plan to provide Iraq with large-scale economic aid once Saddam Hussein was driven from power. The CPA was forced to rush a proposal forward calling for more than $18 billion worth of aid, plus Iraqi oil for food money and international aid, with no real basis for planning.

- **Not giving ORHA a meaningful mandate for conflict termination, stability operations, and nation-building effort.** The creation of a small cadre of civilians and military in the Office of Reconstruction and Assistance (ORHA), many initially recruited for only three-month tours. ORHA planned to operate in an Iraq where all ministries and functions of government remained intact. It was charged with a largely perfunctory nation building task, given negligible human and financial resources, not allowed meaningful liaison with regional powers, and not integrated with the military command. Effective civil military coordination never took place between ORHA and the US command during or after the war, and its mission was given so little initial priority that it was not even come to Baghdad until April 21, 2003 -- twelve days after US forces -- on the grounds it did not have suitable security.

It is true that the war plan is normally the first casualty of any conflict, and that true foresight is difficult where “20-20 hindsight” is easy. Many, if not most, of the factors that led to these failures were, however, brought to the attention of the President, National Security Council, State Department, Department of Defense, and intelligence community in the summer and fall of 2002. No one accurately prophesized all of the future, but many inside and outside government warned what it might be.

The problem was not that the interagency system did not work in providing many key elements of an accurate assessment. The problem was the most senior political and military decision makers ignored what they felt was negative advice. They did so out of a combination of sincere belief, ideological conviction, and political and bureaucratic convenience. However, the cost to the US, its allies, and Iraq has been unacceptably high. Furthermore, they laid the groundwork for many of the problems in creating effective Iraqi forces, and an inclusive political structure that could unite the country.

The end result was that the United States made major strategic mistakes in planning and executing the first phase of the Iraq that greatly exacerbated the impact of its previous failures in adopting workable a Post Cold War strategy, focusing on the right capabilities, shaping the right forces, and providing the right resources. It failed both in its overall grand strategy and in the strategy it selected in going to war.

Its first mistake was its basic rationale for going to war: A threat based on intelligence estimates of Iraqi efforts to create weapons of mass destruction that the US later found did not exist. It seems doubtful that the intelligence community was asked to lie, but it was certainly pressured to provide intelligence to please. The policy community selected the information it wanted to coax and filtered out the information it did not. The system did so much consciously lie to the world as unconsciously lie to itself.
At the grand strategic level, the US failure to plan for meaningful stability operations and nation building was the mistake that ultimately did the most to help lead to the insurgency in Iraq, but it was only one mistake among many. All serve as a warning that no force can ultimately be more effective than the strategy and grand strategy behind it.

**Failures After the Fall of Saddam Hussein**

The US failures in preparing for, and executing the war to drive Saddam Hussein from power almost inevitably laid the groundwork for failure during the year that followed. During April 2003 to June 2004, the US made many additional errors.

- **Failure to create and provide the kind and number of civilian elements in the US government necessary for nation building and stability operations.** A lack of core competence in the US government meant the US did not know how to directly plan and administer the aid once the Administration and Congress approved it, and had to turn to contractors who also had no practical experience working in Iraq or with a command economy. They, in turn, were forced to deal with local contractors, many of whom were corrupt or inept. These problems were particularly serious in USAID, but affecting other parts of the State Department and other civilian agencies, and much of the civilian capability the US did have was not recruited or willing to take risks in the field.

- **Lack of understanding of the level of sectarian and ethnic tension and the risk of civil conflict:** Experts disagreed over the level of sectarian and ethnic tension and violence that the fall of Saddam Hussein would unleash, and many Iraqis felt such problems were minimal. The fact was, however, that the differences between Arab Shi’ite, Arab Sunni, Kurd, and other Iraqi minorities were severe. The Arab Shi’ites wanted control and revenge. The Arab Sunnis sought to preserve power and feared the dominance of a large Arab Shi’ite faction. The Kurds wanted autonomy or independence, and the smaller minorities wanted security and to survive. The US did not see the ethnic and sectarian fault lines that could divide the country that insurgents could exploit, and that could lead to civil war.

- **Inability to see that excessive de-Ba’athification could deprive the country of its secular core:** The US saw Iraqi exiles – many who had strong sectarian and ethnic ties – as the force for change and the Iraqis who stayed in Iraq and supported the Ba’ath to survive as potential threats. The bulk of Iraq’s secular leaders and professionals, however, had at least some ties to the Ba’ath and many had senior positions. So many of these Iraqis were disqualified from office, government, and the military that Iraq lost much of its secular leadership core, and many Sunnis were needlessly alienated. At the same time, Shi’ites with strong ties to Iran, who were sectarian and sometimes Islamist, and with links to various militias were elevated to power.

- **Fundamental misunderstanding of the Islamist extremist threat:** At one level, the US simply could not understand how deeply religious many Iraqis were and that Islam was their primary value system, and not democracy, human rights, or Western secular values. At a more serious level, the US was engaging in a war on terrorism without understanding it had opened up a major new window of vulnerability for Neo-Salafi Islamist extremists to exploit, and that they could take control of most of the insurgency by exploiting the isolation of Arab Sunnis and push the country to the edge of civil war by attacking sensitive Shi’ite and Kurdish targets. It focused on the Ba’ath, and not the entire mix of threats.

- **Failure to plan and execute efforts to maintain the process of governance at the local, provincial, and central level; to anticipate the risk the structure of government would collapse and the risk of looting; and to create a plan for restructuring the military, police, and security forces** -- all of which needed to be proclaimed and publicized before, during, and immediately after the initial invasion to win the support of Iraqi officials and officers who were not linked to active support of Saddam Hussein and past abuses, and to preserving the core of governance that could lead to the rapid creation of both a legitimate government and security.

- **Lack of early reaction to the wartime collapse of Iraqi military, security, and police forces and a failure to focus immediately on creating effective Iraqi forces** -- a failure that placed a major and avoidable burden on US and other Coalition forces and compounded the Iraqi feeling that Iraq had been occupied by hostile
forces. This failure was compounded by the failure to see the need to rush a working criminal justice system into place, and ensure that the central government establish a presence and services at the local level.

- **Formal dissolution of the Iraqi military without making an adequate effort to replace it.** It was not until May 2003, roughly two months after the fall of Baghdad, that a 4,000-man US military police effort was authorized for deployment to Baghdad, and it then took time to arrive. No serious effort to rebuild Iraqi police forces took place until June 2004, in spite of mass desertions right after the fighting and the turmoil caused by disbanding the Ba’ath Party and military and security forces.\(^42\)

- **Failing to honestly assess the nature and size of the Iraqi insurgency as it grew and became steadily more dangerous.** While the US, CPA, and US command in Iraq did gradually recognize that a military threat was developing, it was initially seen as a small group of Ba’athist former regime loyalists or “bitter enders.” It was not until late 2003 that the US began to realize just how serious the insurgency really was, and react to it. It was not until winter that a major planning effort was made to determine how the US should seek to rebuild Iraqi military, security, and police forces capable of dealing with the rising threat, and not until late in 2004 that a critical mass of funds, advisors, equipment and facilities were really in place.

- **Many elements of the various militias were left intact, and Iraq was left an armed society.** The CPA did make plans to disband the militias but never gave the effort serious high-level support, and these plans were largely aborted when the CPA was dissolved in June 2004.

- **Replacing ORHA after the fall of Saddam Hussein with the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), and suddenly improvising a vast nation-building and stability effort, recruiting and funding such an operation with little time for planning.** Then attempting to carry out the resulting mission along heavily ideological lines that attempt to impose American methods and values on Iraq.

- **Inability to assess and react to the overall scale of Iraq’s economic problems:** The US proved unwilling or unable to see just how serious the impact of the “command kleptocracy” the Ba’ath had established was, and the impact of war, favoritism, corruption, and sanctions over a 30 year period. It grossly underestimated the level of effort needed to reconstruct and modernize the Iraq economy, the short comings and the vulnerability of the oil sector, problems in infrastructure and services, problems in a state-dominated industrial sector and problems in the agriculture sector. The US at best saw the “tip of the iceberg,” and was unprepared for the level of economic problems, unemployment, waste and correction, and overall economic vulnerability that followed.

- **Allowing, if not encouraging, the CPA to adopt a “revolutionary” approach to transforming Iraq’s economy and society.** It initially planned for a situation where the US-led coalition could improve it own values and judgments about the Iraqi people, politics, economy, and social structure for a period of some three years – rather than to expedite the transfer of sovereignty back to Iraq as quickly as possible. The record is mixed, but the CPA only seems to have decided to expedite the transfer of sovereignty in October 2003, after the insurgency had already become serious, and its choice of June 2004 for doing so was largely arbitrary.

- **When a decision was taken to create a major aid program, the overall plan for reconstruction and aid was rushed into place, and never was validated with proper plans and surveys.** By late 2003, the pressure to find funds for short-term projects designed to bring (or buy) local security had already become acute. Over time, more and more aid money had to be reprogrammed to meet such short-term needs. This often did more to give Iraqis funds and security than the longer-term aid programs, but it further disrupted an already poorly planned and executed formal aid plan.

- **Placing the CPA and US commands in separate areas, creating large, secure zones that isolated the US effort from Iraqis, and carrying out only limited coordination with other Coalition allies.** The US did not develop a fully coordinated civil-military effort, and initially let a system develop with major differences by region and command.

- **Inability to deploy the necessary core competence for stability operations and nation building within the US military and government:** This failure was compounded by a lack of language and area skills and
training on the part of most US military forces, and intelligence capabilities designed to provide the human intelligence (HUMINT), technical collection, analytic capabilities, and “fusion” centers necessary for stability, counterterrorist and counterinsurgency operations.

- Staffing the CPA largely with people recruited for short tours, and often chosen on the basis of political and ideological vetting, rather than experience and competence. Civilians were often chosen more on the basis of political vetting than experience and competence. Many were on 3-6 month tours, and permissive rotation policies allowed most who wanted to take an early departure to do so. Most military were deployed on short rotations. There was little effort to establish a stable cadre of experienced personnel who remained in their positions and developed stable relations with the Iraqis.

**Failures From June 2004 to the Present**

The US slowly improved its efforts in Iraq after the transfer of power back from the Coalition to the interim Iraqi government in June 2004. At the same time, it continued to make a series of serious mistakes:

- The Coalition and CPA had deprived Iraq of much of its secular leadership when it removed most Ba’athist officials from office. The end result was to restructure the nature of political power in Iraq along secular and ethnic lines -- divided between an emerging Shi’ite majority, with strong religious ties and links to Iran, separatist Kurdish elements, and Sunnis who now were being pushed towards taking religious rather than secular nationalist positions. While some “national” political leaders did emerge, the end result was to attempt democracy in a nation with few experienced political leaders, emerging political parties divided largely on sectarian and ethnic lines, and no underpinning experience in enforcing human rights and a rule of law. Elections and formal documents like constitutions were confused with a functioning political base that could make democracy work. One key impact was that such efforts helped push the Iraqis into polarizing and voting on sectarian and ethnic lines. When the first true national election took place on December 15, 2005, Iraqis voted in very large numbers, but they voted to divide and not to unite.

- The political process the US imposed was too demanding in terms of time and complexity. The sudden end to the Coalition in June 2004 left a partial political vacuum. Then, a focus on elections and the constitution created a schedule where Iraqis had to vote for an interim government, then for a constitution, and hold another election for a permanent government in a little over a year during 2005. Iraqis were then left with the need to form a new government, create new methods of governance, resolve over 50 issues in the constitution within a nominal period of four months after a government was in place, campaign for 60 days for a new constitutional referendum, and then implement whatever new political system emerged during the course of 2006. This process inevitably further polarized Iraqi politics along sectarian and ethnic lines.

- The US emphasized elections and politics over governance at every level from the national to the local. It did not provide strong advisory teams for key ministries, including the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior. It had very small and weakly organized interagency teams at the governorate or provincial level, with tenuous coordination and often with only a token civil presence in the field. It did not organize and man provincial reconstruction teams for Iraq’s 18 governorates until 2006, and none were in place as of April 2006 -- more than three years after the war. Little effort was made to deal with local government, leaving the government of key cities up to the political leadership that could take control and which had the militia or police forces to enforce it. This created major problems in Baghdad and helped allow Shi’ite Islamist extremists to take de facto control of Basra.

- The US and its allies became involved in serious military operations and urban warfare against Sunni insurgents in Western Iraq, but still continued to underestimate the seriousness of the emerging Sunni insurgency, and the extent it might push Iraq towards division and civil war. They continued to treat the insurgents as a relatively small group of activists with a limited base. At the same time, the US was slow to see how serious the rise of Neo-Salafi extremist groups was, or that their strategy included a deliberate effort to divide Iraq and provoke a civil war, rather than simply attack Coalition and allied forces. As a result, it underestimated the seriousness of the Shi’ite reaction, and the creation of Shi’ite militia forces and covert forces designed to attack Sunni targets.
US military operations often occurred at a level that resulted in short-term tactical success – sometimes seriously damaging urban areas in the process – but which did not bring lasting security or stability. It took considerable time for the US to understand that either US or Iraqi forces had to occupy the areas where the insurgents were defeated, and provide aid and security after military action was critical. It took equally long to realize that stability operations required immediate and effective aid, police activity, and an Iraqi government presence.

By mid-2004, the US came to recognize that the creation of effective Iraqi forces was critical to creating a secure and stable Iraq, but was slow to staff such an effort, provide the funds required, and see the scale of effort required. It was not until late 2004 that it provided the resources needed to train the regular military forces, and not until 2005 that it recognized that new Iraqi units would need embedded training teams and partner units to become effective. As late as the end of 2005, it still provided only limited equipment to the Iraqi regular forces. It still did not have credible plans for making them fully independent of a need for support from US air, artillery, and armor, and was slow to see the need to give them independent C4I/BM and IS&R capabilities and a proper mix of sustainment and combat and service support units.

The US was slow to see that the emergence of civil violence, and sectarian and ethnic conflict, was becoming at least as serious a threat as the Sunni insurgency. Sectarian and ethnic violence had been an issue from the start, but it grew steadily more serious during 2004 as the Sunni insurgents shifted the focus of their attacks from Coalition targets to include Shi'ite, Kurdish, and pro-government Sunnis. This provokes a Shi'ite and Kurdish response in terms of ethnic cleansing, killings and kidnappings, death squads and other forces of divisive civil violence. Shi'ite militias and local Sunni security forces became a major new source of violence, compounded by escalating violent crime.

US did not pay proper attention to the emergence of the Ministry of Interior, and some of its key special security units, as Shi'ite, rather than national forces. The end result was a series of prison abuses, the division of part of Iraq’s forces along sectarian lines, and the involvement of at least some Ministry of Interior forces in “death squads” attacking Sunni targets and increasing the risk of civil war. It was not until October 2005 that the US resolved jurisdictional squabbles between State and Defense over who should control the advisory effort for the Ministry of Interior and its forces.

These problems were compounded by the relatively low priority that continued to be given to the development of effective police forces, courts, and a government presence tied to the national government. The police the Coalition trained and equipped were sometimes corrupt and lacking in leadership, and often too poorly equipped and deployed to operate in areas where insurgents, militias, or hostile political groups were present. A functioning court system was often lacking, and the central government often did little more than make token appearances and give promises it did not keep. While the insurgency was contained to the point where some 85% of attacks occurred in only four provinces (albeit with 42% of the population), violence was endemic in many other areas. Crime was a major factor, and so was the threat to minorities in areas dominated by a given ethnic group. While insurgent violence was a key factor in Baghdad and Mosul, few areas were really secure and in many Shi’ite areas ordinary Shi’ites faced pressure or threats from Shi’ite militias or extremists.

By the spring of 2003, the tensions between sects and ethnic groups had already begun to produce a process of ethnic separation and ethnic cleansing that became truly serious in 2004 and 2005, and that the US was slow to respond to. In mixed cities, the separation was often by neighborhood, with minorities being forced to relocate to areas where they were in the majority. In cities like Kirkuk and Basra, the lines were far clearer. In Kirkuk, the Kurds pushed for ethnic separation. In Basra, Shi’ite puritans attempted to push out other sects and Shi’ites who would not practice their beliefs. The US had no clear policy or instruments for dealing with these problems.

The State Department and other civil branches of the US government continued to have serious problems in recruiting and retaining suitable personnel. Many career foreign service officers would not volunteer and inexperienced contract personnel had to be deployed. While some professionals did serve at considerable personal sacrifice, the USG could not find enough qualified civilians willing to go into the field and partner US military forces. This put additional strains on the US military, which simply did not have the necessary cadres of civil-military experts, military police, area experts and linguists, etc.
Moreover, the combination of security and recruiting problems tended to keep personnel in the green zone around the Embassy, over manning that area and further under manning operations in the field.

- **USAID and the contracting officers in the Department of Defense lacked the experience and expertise to plan and manage aid on anything like the scale required.** They also lacked basic competence in managing and planning such an effort. Vast waste and corruption occurred in the aid effort, most of which was spent outside Iraq. Spending was used as a measure of effectiveness, not impact on the Iraqi economy or meeting Iraqi needs. Many long-term projects did not meet a valid requirement or were executed in ways where it was impossible to sustain them and/or provide security. Serious problems occurred because the US imposed its own methods and standards on an aging, war-worn infrastructure that Iraqis could maintain but not effectively integrate with US equipment and standards.

- **Interagency rivalry and recruiting problems prevented the timely staffing and deployment of provincial reconstruction teams.** The State Department and Defense Department could not agree on some aspects of how to staff and organize the PRTs until April 2006. Major recruiting problems meant that the pool of civilians recruited for the teams often lacked real professional experience, and most teams remained largely unmanned as of end-March 2006.

- **The Special Inspector General for Iraqi Reconstruction has found massive accounting abuses and fraud in the most expensive aid effort since the Marshall Plan.** The Congressional Research Service estimates the total cost of aid US aid allocations (all grant assistance) for Iraq appropriated from 2003 to 2006 total $28.9 billion. It estimates that $17.6 billion (62%) went for economic and political reconstruction assistance, while $10.9 billion (38%) was used to aid Iraqi security.\(^4^3\) A higher proportion of Iraqi aid was spent on economic reconstruction of critical infrastructure than in the case of Germany and Japan. Total US assistance to Iraq through March 2006 was already equivalent to total assistance (provided to Germany — and almost double that provided to Japan — from 1946-1952. The United States provided Germany with a total of $29.3 billion in assistance in constant 2005 dollars from 1946-1952 with 60% in economic grants and nearly 30% in economic loans, and the remainder in military aid. Total US assistance to Japan for 1946-1952 was roughly $15.2 billion in 2005 dollars, of which 77% was grants and 23% was loans.

- **The aid process made some progress, but was seriously crippled by the fact that the US military did not provide security for most projects, and contract security personnel were extremely expensive and often would only operate in limited areas.** Some 25% or more of aid spending went to security, and aid projects tended to be concentrated in safe areas. Efforts to push the security problem down on to contractors compounded the problem.

- **Rather than honestly admit and assess these political, military, economic, and aid problems, the US government tended to systematically exaggerate what were sometimes very real successes, downplay risks and problems, and provide public and media reporting that “span” the facts to the point where such reporting lost credibility with Iraqis and the US public.** The US seemed unable to develop an effective approach to public diplomacy in Iran and the region, and slowly lost credibility in the US and the rest of the world.

- **These problems were compounded by the misuse of public opinion polls to try to find propaganda arguments, rather than honestly understand the perceptions and needs of the Iraqi people.** From the summer of 2003 on, polls of Iraqis provided serious warnings about anger against the Coalition and distrust of its motives and actions, willingness to support attacks on Coalition forces, divisions within Iraq, and the perceived failure of US efforts to support reconstruction. US officials largely ignored the negative results and cherry picked any favorable results for propaganda and political purposes.

It is important to note that by the spring of 2006, the US finally did have many elements of a potentially successful strategy in place. By that time, however, it was far harder to even help Iraqis create a government, much less make it operate effectively. The bulk of aid funds had been obligated with few lasting real-world achievements. The drift towards a higher level of civil conflict threatened progress in developing the regular military, and progress in reforming the Ministry of Interior, security forces, and police was delayed by months without an effective
government. America had made a long series of strategic, tactical, and operational mistakes from the initial war-planning phase in 2002 through early 2006, and the US, its allies, and the Iraqis were paying the price tag.

Foresight is always far more difficult than “20-20 hindsight.” Many, if not most, of these problems however, were brought to the attention of the President, National Security Council, State Department, Department of Defense, intelligence community and in interagency forums in the summer and fall of 2002. No one accurately prophesized all of the future, but many inside and outside government warned what it might be. The problem was not that the “system” did not work in providing many key elements of an accurate assessment, it was that the most senior political and military decision makers ignored what they felt was negative advice out of a combination of sincere belief, ideological conviction, and political and bureaucratic convenience.

Over time, these failures pushed the US to the limit of the ground forces it can easily deploy. They have helped cause the death of thousands of Americans and other Coalition forces after the fall of Saddam, and led to well over 17,000 wounded. They also helped to kill and wound tens of thousands of Iraqis. They also help make the political problems caused by Iraq’s sectarian and ethnic divisions far worse, made Iraq far more vulnerable to outside neo-Salafi Islamist extremist influences, and laid the groundwork for many of the problems in creating effective Iraqi governance and military, security, and police forces.

No one can claim that all of these US failures were avoidable, or Iraq would not have had serious problems in any case. The fact remains, however, that most such failures were the result of decisions made at the highest levels of US policy and the direct responsibility of the President, Vice President, Secretary of Defense, National Security Advisor, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and service chiefs.
II. The Evolving Nature of the Conflict: May 2003-June 2006

The mistakes the Coalition made before and during the effort to drive Saddam Hussein from power were compounded by the mistakes it made as the insurgency unfolded. The US-led Coalition initially sought to impose its own rule on Iraq and tried to restrict the development of Iraqi armed forces to a token force geared to defend Iraq’s borders against external aggression.

The Coalition was slow to understand that only an Iraqi government, and Iraqi forces, would be seen as legitimate and avoid growing Iraqi hostility. It failed to understand the scale of the sectarian and ethnic divisions Iraq faced and that it favored Iraqi exiles and the Kurds in ways that pushed many Sunnis into active opposition.

Iraqis too, however, failed to see the risks of sectarian and ethnic conflict. Shi’ites and Kurds helped push Sunnis towards violence and extremism, and forced many moderate Sunnis out of the government and military because they had joined the Ba’ath regime to survive. Outside Sunni Neo-Salafi Islamists, some who later affiliated themselves with Al Qa’ida used sectarian and ethnic divisions to largely take over the insurgency and seek to provoke large-scale civil war to both drive out the Coalition and create a level of instability they could exploit to take power.

Shi’ite and Kurdish retaliation and revanchism, bad Iraqi political leadership and the search for self-advantage, and corruption added to the problem. By 2006, former regime loyalists had largely been replaced by native Islamist movements, and Shi’ite and Kurdish sectarian and ethnic elements had become nearly as dangerous as the original insurgents.

Denial as a Method of Counter-Insurgency Warfare

US policymakers and many in the US military initially lived in a state of near-denial about the rise of terrorism and insurgency. The US assumed for much of the first year after the fall of Saddam Hussein that it was dealing with a limited number of insurgents that Coalition forces would defeat well before the election. It did not see the threat level that would emerge if it did not provide jobs or pensions for Iraqi career officers, or co-opt them into the nation building effort.

It was slow to see that some form of transition payments were necessary for the young Iraqi soldiers that faced massive, nation-wide unemployment. The US still failed to acknowledge the true scale of the insurgent threat and the extent to which popular resentment of Coalition forces would rise if it did not act immediately to rebuild a convincing mix of Iraqi military and security forces.

The US failed to establish the proper political conditions to reduce Iraqi popular resentment of the Coalition forces and create a political climate that would ease the task of replacing them with effective Iraqi forces. It failed to make it clear to the Iraqi people that the US and Britain had no economic ambitions in Iraq and would not establish permanent bases, or keep Iraqi forces weak to ensure their control. In fact, Lt. Gen. Jay Garner, the first American Administrator in Iraq, suggested in early 2004 that US forces might remain in Iraq for “the next few decades,” adding that securing basing rights for the US should be a top priority.44

During the summer and fall of 2003, however Iraqi insurgents emerged as a growing threat with significant popular support in Arab Sunni areas, and developed a steadily more sophisticated mix of tactics. In the process, a native and foreign Islamist extremist threat also developed which
increasingly sought to divide Iraq’s Sunni Arabs from its Arab Shi’ites, Kurds, and other Iraqi minorities.

In *Cradle of Conflict*, Michael Knights refers to the post-war phase in Iraq as a period that “was badly blotched by a combination of planning and bureaucratic shortfalls.” He argues that two post-war factors combined to fuel the Iraqi insurgency. The first was the lack of basic provision by the occupying powers for services and security, and the second was the exacerbation of Sunnis’ fears that they would be excluded from the political process. Steven Metz more broadly describes the link between the growth of the insurgency and the failures made by US forces during the post-war period. Referring to the situation in Iraq, he writes that, “An insurgency is born when a power fails to address social or regional polarization, sectarianism, endemic corruption, crime, various forms of radicalism, or rising expectations. The margin of error is narrower for an outside occupying power than for an inept or repressive national regime as people tend to find mistakes or bad behavior by one of their own more tolerable than that of an outsider.”

The US was slow to react to the growth of the insurgency in Iraq, to admit it was largely domestic in character, and to admit it had significant popular support. The US military and intelligence effort in the field only began to understand that the terrorist and insurgent threat was serious and growing in the fall of 2003.

Senior US officials and officers kept referring to the attackers as “terrorists”, kept issuing estimates that they could not number more than 5,000, and said they were a mixture of outside elements and diehard former regime loyalists (FRLs) that had little popular support. The US largely ignored the warnings Iraqi opinion polls provided about the unpopularity of the war and Coalition, and said that Coalition political, economic, and security efforts were either successful or would soon become so. In short, the US failed to honestly assess the facts on the ground in a manner reminiscent of Vietnam.

The continuing US focus on "FRLs" also ignored the true nature of the insurgency. The US was dealing with a mixture of Iraqi nationalism, Sunni resentment and anger, popular opposition to any form of Western occupation, and a slowly growing number of foreign and Iraqi neo-Salafi Sunni Islamist extremists. It also faced a lesser but still significant threat from Iraqi Shi’ite Islamist “activists.” The problem was broad support, not a small group of “bitter enders.”

The US was slow to understand the role of the media. Iraqi and foreign journalists provided an inadvertent (and sometimes deliberate) propaganda arm, and media coverage of insurgent activity and attacks provided a de facto command and communications net to insurgents. This informal “net” provided warning, showed insurgents what tactics did and did not work, and allowed them to coordinate their attacks to reinforce those of other insurgent cells and groups without formal ties or coordination.

The Coalition did not try to create Iraqi forces with the capability to deal with serious insurgency and security challenges for more than a year, and then was slow to put these plans into practice. The US did not attempt to seriously train and equip Iraqi forces for proactive security and counterinsurgency missions until April 2004 – nearly a year after the fall of Saddam Hussein and two-thirds of a year after a major insurgency problem began to emerge. It then took until the fall of 2004 to bring a critical mass of advisors and military aid together for the army. The risk of sectarian divisions within the Ministry of Interior was ignored for far too long and it was not
until the fall of 2005 that the Coalition began to understand just how critical the police were as a component of Iraqi forces.

As late as July 2004, some senior members of the Bush Administration still grossly understated the seriousness of the insurgency in their public announcements, and growing Iraqi hostility to the use of Coalition forces. Administration spokesmen still talked about a core insurgent force of only 5,000, when many Coalition experts on the ground in Iraq saw the core as comprised of at least 12,000-16,000. They also ignored signs of Sunni versus Shi’ite tension, and growing ethnic tension in the north.

**Baseline/Post-Conflict: 1 May 2003 – Fall 2003**

If one looks at the initial pattern of attacks, the insurgency was slow to gather momentum, and initially was dominated largely by former regime loyalists. Most of the early militants seem to have been former Saddam Hussein loyalists (FRLs), or Iraqi Sunni nationalists, with little impact by Iraqi Islamist extremists or foreign jihadists. It was tapes from Saddam Hussein and Ba’athists urging militants to continue fighting, rather than tapes from Abu Musab Zarqawi, that were broadcast around the country. The bulk of the money came from Ba’athist sources, and most training cadres and leaders were still largely FRLs.

Much of the initial violence during May and June 2003 was centered on Fallujah and Baghdad, in the area known as the “Sunni triangle”. Attacks against mosques and oil facilities were targets from the start. So was the targeting of local Iraqi officials and recruits. In general, however, the insurgents concentrated on Coalition targets, NGOs, and foreign diplomats.

A chronology of some of the early incidents illustrates both how the insurgency emerged and the types of attacks insurgents carried out in the initial months following the fall of Saddam's regime:

- **May 1, 2003**: President George W. Bush declares an end to major combat operations in Iraq. Seven US soldiers were wounded in a grenade attack upon an American base in Fallujah, a stronghold for Saddam Hussein loyalists. Earlier, US troops killed 15 civilians at a protest in the city.

- **May 27, 2003**: Two US soldiers die in an organized attack on an army checkpoint in Fallujah.

- **June 15, 2003**: Hundreds of American soldiers swept through Fallujah in an operation called “Desert Scorpion”. The operation is intended to defeat organized Iraqi resistance.

- **June 30, 2003**: Three blasts rock Fallujah. One, at the Al-Hassan mosque, kills a Muslim cleric and six theology students, and injures 15 others. US Central Command reports that “something like an ammunition dump” exploded near the mosque.

- **July 1, 2003**: An explosion destroys a Sunni mosque in Fallujah, killing at least 10 Iraqis, including the chief cleric, and injuring four others. Many Iraqis blame an American missile for the destruction and chant, “America is the enemy of God.”

- **July 5, 2003**: An explosion at a police-training center in Ramadi killed seven Iraqi police recruits and wounded 40.

- **July 16, 2003**: Attacks in western Iraq claim the lives of a pro-US mayor and his son.
August 7, 2003: A car bomb explodes outside the Jordanian embassy in Baghdad, killing at least 15 people and wounding dozens.

August 15, 2003: Saboteurs blow up a crude oil export pipeline in northern Iraq, igniting a fire and disrupting oil exports to Turkey.

August 19, 2003: A truck bomb explodes outside U.N. headquarters in Baghdad, killing 24 people, including the head of the U.N. mission, Sergio Vieira de Mello. More than 100 were injured. The dead also include the Iraqi coordinator for the U.N. children's fund, UNICEF, and several World Bank staffers.

August 29, 2003: An explosion at a Najaf mosque kills 95, including one of Iraq’s most prominent Shi’ite leaders, Ayatollah Muhammad Baqr al-Hakim. Another 125 are wounded.

As time passed, and the insurgents became more organized, the lethality and frequency of attacks increased. There were more attacks on US and Coalition forces, some by members of newly formed militias roaming the streets of Iraq’s major cities. Nevertheless, US and Coalition casualties were still limited. A total of 37 US soldiers were killed in May. The death toll for US troops in June was 30. In July the death toll reached 47, but leveled off in August and September to 35 and 30 respectively. The monthly death toll was still only 43 in October, although it suddenly rose to 82 in November, almost doubling from previous months.

The US initially perceived many of the insurgent attacks as part of the normal breakdown in law and order following any war and not as the seeds of an insurgency. It also saw the solution as finding new jobs for the militias rather than dealing with actual insurgent opposition. As a result, the US sometimes focused on crime rather than the insurgents, and the sought to avoid confronting the militias and focused on co-opting them.

Soldiers were under direct orders to only confiscate those weapons they came across while on patrol. A May 5, 2003 article in The Miami Herald described the role of the militias at this time as follows:

Thousands of gunmen appear each Friday in the slum formerly known as Saddam City, with the blessings of some Shi’ite clerics, ostensibly to protect worshipers. Members, who say they answer to the sheiks at the Hikma mosque, claim they’re 5,000 to 6,000 strong and on guard against attacks from any leftover Fedayeen Saddam or other Ba’ath Party loyalists.

"I am taking orders from the mosque. I am a soldier," said Samer Elias, 28, a former Iraqi Army infantryman commanding a checkpoint a few blocks from the mosque.

...Kurdish political parties have posted a few armed fighters at their Baghdad offices to inspect all visitors and ward against attack. They’re the vanguard of an estimated 30,000 Kurdish forces, roughly 15,000 each in the Kurdish Democratic Party and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, loyal to Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talibani, at times rival warlords for leadership of Kurdish northern Iraq.

...But the best-organized, most evident Iraqi militia is the 1,800-strong Free Iraqi Forces who answer to Ahmed Chalabi’s Iraqi National Congress, the Pentagon-backed opposition movement that set up shop at the Iraqi Hunting Club in the desirable Mansour District.

The Insurgency Becomes Serious: Fall to End 2003

Focused killings of Iraqi officials and recruits, and anti-US/Coalition violence, had clearly become serious by October and November 2003. US forces faced an average of 15-20 attacks per day during this period. The level of sophistication of attacks also increased steadily. The first coordinated suicide bombing occurred in October 2003. The following month, militants shot down two US helicopters. Together, these incidents signaled the start of a much more serious insurgency.
Insurgent attacks during this period included:

- **October 9, 2003**: A suicide bomber drove his car into a police station in Baghdad, killing nine. Two US soldiers die and four are injured in an ambush in Baghdad.
- **October 12, 2003**: A suicide car bombing near the Baghdad Hotel killed eight and wounded 32.
- **October 14, 2003**: A suicide car bomb exploded outside the Turkish embassy in Baghdad, killing one Iraqi and wounding at least 13.
- **October 17, 2003**: Three US soldiers and at least seven Iraqis are killed in a gun battle outside the office of a Shia cleric in Karbala.
- **October 19, 2003**: Two American soldiers died in an ambush outside Kirkuk.
- **October 26, 2003**: A rocket hit the Rashid hotel in Baghdad, narrowly missing Paul Wolfowitz, the American deputy secretary of defense. A US colonel died; 18 others were wounded.
- **October 27, 2003**: Four coordinated suicide attacks in Baghdad killed 43 and wounded more than 200. The targets were the headquarters of the Red Crescent (Islamic Red Cross) and three police stations. It was the bloodiest day since the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime.
- **November 2, 2003**: In the single deadliest strike on US forces since the war began, guerrillas shot down an American Chinook helicopter south of Fallujah, killing 16 US soldiers and injuring 21 others.
- **November 7, 2003**: Six US soldiers died when their Black Hawk helicopter crashed after being struck by a rocket-propelled grenade.
- **November 12, 2003**: A car bomb outside an Italian military police station in Nasiriya killed 18 Italian officers and at least eight Iraqis. The US launched Operation Iron Hammer against suspected Hussein loyalists.
- **November 21, 2003**: A suicide bombing outside the PUK office in Kirkuk killed four.
- **November 29, 2003**: Two US soldiers, seven Spanish intelligence officers, two Japanese diplomats, and a Colombian oil worker died in separate guerrilla attacks.
- **November 30, 2003**: US forces repelled three ambushes on American convoys in Samarra, killing 46 Iraqis and capturing eight.

The capture of Saddam Hussein outside Tikrit in early December 2003 did not reduce the level of insurgent violence. The US death toll for December was 40. By January 31, US fatalities from the post-combat period numbered 381, compared to 138 from the combat phase of hostilities. Between December and January, insurgents shot down five US military helicopters.

**Serious Fighting in the Pre-Transfer of Power Period: Winter-Spring 2004**

The lethality and sophistication of insurgency attacks increased dramatically in February and March 2004, and focused more on ethnic and sectarian targets:

- **February 1, 2004**: 109 people died and 247 are wounded in two suicide attacks during celebrations at the headquarters of two leading Kurdish parties in Irbil. One American soldier was killed and 12 were wounded in a rocket attack. 20 people trying to loot an ammunitions dump in southwestern Iraq were killed when the munitions unexpectedly explode.
- **February 10, 2004**: A car bomb exploded outside a police station in Iskandariya, killing at least 55 and wounding up to 65.
- **February 11, 2004**: In yet another attempt to disrupt the creation of security forces, a suicide bomber rammed a car packed with explosives into a crowd of Iraqi Army recruits in central Baghdad, killing at least 47 and wounding 50 others.
February 14, 2004: Roughly 70 guerrillas firing rockets, mortars and machineguns raided police headquarters and the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC) in Fallujah in an effort to free foreign prisoners. 15 policemen, four insurgents and at least four civilians died in the attack. The dead guerrillas appeared to be Lebanese and Iranian nationals. At least 70 prisoners escaped, many – 18 by one account – fled with the attackers.

February 23, 2004: At least 10 people were killed and over 35 injured when a car bomb exploded outside a Kirkuk police station.

March 2, 2004: In the bloodiest day in Iraq since the end of the war, at least five bombs exploded near Shi’ite religious ceremonies in Baghdad and Karbala as hundreds of thousands of pilgrims packed the streets for the Ashoura ceremony. At least 270 people died; 573 were wounded.

March 9, 2004: Iraqi policemen murdered two CPA officials and their Iraqi translator outside Baghdad. The “targeting killings” were the first American civilian deaths in Iraq.

March 23, 2004: 11 Iraqi policemen were killed in separate attacks in Kirkuk and Hillah.

March 24, 2004: Fallujah continued to be a hotbed of insurgent activity, as attackers ambushed a US military patrol, killing three civilians and wounding two American soldiers.

Local Iraqi security forces, including police recruits, were signaled out for attack, and this initially reduced Coalition casualties. US fatalities for the month of February fell to 21; the lowest since May 2003. But March produced the second highest death toll for US troops-52-since the end of the war.

Pre-Sovereignty: 1 April – 28 June 2004

By early spring 2004, the insurgency had evolved into a two-pronged offensive. Coalition forces now faced a war on two fronts: against the Sunnis in central Iraq and against the Shi’ites in the south. At the same time, Sunni Islamist extremist groups began to play a more active role, both in terms of attacks and in circulating propaganda, tapes, and training aids.

The Shi’ite threat was largely from the Moqtada al-Sadr, a Shi’ite cleric. In early April, his followers seized control of several cities. Violent clashes between US forces and Shi’ite militias erupted in Kufa, Najaf and Qut.

US forces continued to battle Sunni insurgents in Fallujah and elsewhere in the Sunni Triangle. The period between April and June 2004 was marked by frequent battles between US and insurgent forces and had clearly become guerrilla war rather than a terrorist campaign.

The number of attacks against Iraqi civilians decreased noticeably, as insurgents concentrated their efforts on US forces. Because of the growing number of clashes between insurgents and Coalition forces, US fatalities for the month of April increased to 137, more than the previous three months combined. US fatalities for the month of May were 80.

Some of the intensity of the fighting was defused, however, when Sadr endorsed the Iraqi Interim Government and urged his followers to adhere to a previously negotiated ceasefire.

Early Sovereignty: 29 June – 26 November 2004

The transfer of power from the CPA to the interim Iraqi government did more to intensity the insurgency and broaden the base of insurgent attacks than reduce tension or “legitimize” the appointed Iraqi government.

At least 162 US soldiers were killed in the three months immediately following the June 28 handover; more than the entire number killed during the war itself. Insurgents continued their
attacks against Coalition forces into the fall of 2004, killing 81 US soldiers in September and 65 in October. In August, more than 1,100 US troops were injured; the highest monthly total since the start of the US led invasion. Another grim milestone was passed on September 7, 2004, when US military fatalities reached 1,000.

**Shifts in the Nature of the Insurgency**

This period was marked by a dramatic increase in the role of Neo-Salafi Sunni Islamist extremists. A number of such groups, several pledging allegiance to Zarqawi, emerged during the fall of 2004. There were also signs that the insurgents had penetrated Iraqi security forces. On October 23, insurgents dressed in Iraqi police uniforms killed 49 Iraqi Army recruits as they returned from a training mission with US forces.

The insurgents also increased the number of kidnappings of foreigners in an attempt to get countries to withdraw from the Coalition. In a seven-week period in September and October, 2 Italian aid workers; a Japanese civilian; and the British-Iraqi director of CARE international, in addition to several American and British contractors were kidnapped. Some are released; others are beheaded.

The first major battle between US and insurgent forces, many of which were discovered to be Islamists, also took place during this period. In early November, US and token Iraqi forces entered Fallujah in a major assault designed to rid the city of insurgents. The fighting was sometimes intense and led to the destruction of parts of the city. The insurgents took heavy casualties and were forced to flee the city, but found that Iraqi forces were not yet ready for serious fighting or capable of securing the city and the Iraqi government was not yet capable of establishing an effective presence or governance. The end result undercut much of the impact of Coalition victory and exacerbated tensions between Sunnis and the Shi’ite dominated government.

Despite the Coalition offensive in Fallujah, insurgent activity rose elsewhere in the country. The ongoing insurgent attacks in Baghdad, Mosul, Balad and the Sunni Triangle demonstrated the strength of the Zarqawi network and the Iraqi insurgency. On November 14, Fallujah fell to Coalition forces. The US military suffered 38 fatalities and more than 245 casualties. Between 1,200-1,600 insurgents were killed. Many more insurgents fled the city prior to the operation. November was the deadliest month for American troops since the invasion. Although 137 US soldiers were killed, fewer than half of them were killed in the Fallujah attack, signaling insurgents were resuming their offensive on US forces everywhere.

Sunni insurgents repeatedly showed they could strike in ethnically mixed and Shi’ite dominated cities like Baghdad, Mosul and Basra, in spite of US and Iraqi offensives. Increasingly bold and deadly insurgent attacks killed more than 80 Iraqis in a three-day period in early December.

In one of the more deadly incidents, insurgents attacked a bus of unarmed Iraqi civilian contractors, killing 17. In Baghdad, insurgents struck the Green Zone two days in a row, killing almost twenty and wounding several dozen. On December 15, insurgents attempted to overrun two police stations in Mosul but were repelled by Iraqi police and National Guards. One week later, insurgents mounted a second attack, this time on an Iraqi military outpost in Mosul. The security presence in Mosul remained fragile after 80% of the police force abandoned their post in November due to mounting security fears.
The December 21 bombing of a US military mess tent in Mosul, which killed at least 22 people, including 18 Americans, further demonstrated the reach of the insurgents during the winter 2004. The US death toll for December was 72.

The road from Baghdad to the international airport outside the city became a popular target for insurgents, and became a symbol of the Coalition and Iraqi government’s problems in bringing security to Iraq in late 2004. Iraqis referred to the route as “Death Street” and “IED alley”, while US forces called it “Route Irish.” The continued violence in Sunni neighborhoods like Amariya, Hamra, Jihad, and Qaddisiya caused senior officials to use armored buses called “Rhinos” and helicopters when traveling in the area.

More Attacks on Iraqis

The insurgents stepped up their attacks on Iraqis. In early fall, the Iraqi Health Ministry reported that nearly 3,200 Iraqi civilians had been killed since April. September and October 2004 proved to be particularly bloody months, with more than 34 car bomb attacks throughout the country—the highest monthly total since the US invasion—occurring in September alone. Other attacks during this period included:

- **September 6, 2004:** In Fallujah, a car bomb killed seven US Marines and three Iraqi soldiers.
- **September 7, 2004:** One American soldier and 33 Iraqi insurgents were killed in clashes in Sadr City.
- **September 12, 2004:** 80 civilians were killed by insurgents in a 24 hour period. Many of the attacks were synchronized bombins; a group calling itself Unity and Jihad, which is reportedly led by Zarqawi, claimed responsibility for many of the attacks.
- **September 14, 2004:** A car bomb outside Iraq’s Army headquarters in Baghdad killed 47 recruits. 12 policemen were gunned down in drive-by shooting in Baquba. Zarqawi claimed responsibility for both attacks.
- **September 17, 2004:** A suicide car bomb killed at least 13 people near a police checkpoint in Baghdad. Elsewhere in Baghdad, US soldiers clashed with insurgents.
- **September 30, 2004:** Two car bombs ripped through a crowd celebrating the opening of a new sewer plant, killing 41 Iraqis, including at least 34 children; 139 were wounded.
- **October 4, 2004:** Three car bombs – two in Baghdad and one in Mosul – exploded, killing 26 people and injuring 100.
- **October 7, 2004:** Two rockets struck the Sheraton Baghdad hotel.
- **October 10, 2004:** At least 10 Iraqis died in explosions near the oil ministry and police academy. A suicide bomber fatally wounded a US soldier outside the Ministry of Culture in Baghdad.
- **October 12, 2004:** Six American troops died from hostile fire in Baghdad and in Al Anbar Province.
- **October 13, 2004:** Bombs in Baghdad, Mosul and the Al Anbar region killed seven US soldiers.
- **October 14, 2004:** For the first time since the end of the war, insurgents penetrated the heavily fortified Green Zone in Baghdad, killing four Americans and six Iraqis.
- **October 15, 2004:** Car bombs near the Syrian border and in Mosul killed five American troops.
- **October 23, 2004:** Insurgents dressed as police officers executed 49 newly trained Iraqi soldiers on a remote road in eastern Iraq.
• **October 25, 2004:** An explosion near the Australian embassy in Baghdad killed three Iraqi and injured two Australian soldiers.

• **October 28, 2004:** A militant group called “The Army of Ansar al-Sunna” executed 11 Iraqi security officers taken hostage south of Baghdad. The group, which was blamed for numerous beheadings, was an offshoot of Ansar al-Islam.

• **October 30, 2004:** In the deadliest day for American forces in six months, nine Marines were killed and nine more were injured in insurgent attacks in the Al Anbar province. At least 25 Iraqi civilians died from insurgent violence and from reckless fire by Iraqi security forces. Seven died when insurgents attacked the Al Arabiya news network. A previously unknown group calling itself “The 1920 Revolution Brigades” took responsibility for the attack.

• **October 31, 2004:** Insurgents fired a rocket at a Tikrit hotel, killing 15 Iraqis and wounding eight.

**Estimating the Impact of the Insurgency through October 2004**

There are no reliable unclassified counts of insurgent attacks and incidents, or of the casualties on both sides during this period. No record seems to have been kept of many cases of individual killings, disappearances, and kidnappings and there is no clear basis for identifying who was responsible or whether insurgent action was involved, or the attack was simply a revenge killing or crime. Estimates of insurgent casualties are tenuous at best, and in all cases involving Iraqis the data that are available tend to focus on deaths and not wounded -- particularly if the wounded did not require hospitalization.

The NGO Coordinating Committee on Iraq did, however, make useful rough estimates of the patterns of attack between September 2003 and October 2004. These patterns seem broadly correct and both illustrate key patterns in the fighting, and the need for competent and combat-capable Iraqi government military, security, and police forces:

• From September 2003 through October 2004, there was a rough balance between the three primary methods of attack, namely improvised explosive devices (IEDs), direct fire, and indirect fire, with a consistent but much smaller number of vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIED). Numbers of attacks varied significantly by month. There was a slow decline from well over 400 attacks each by improvised explosive devices (IEDs), direct fire weapons, and indirect fire weapons to around 300. There was, however, a slow increase in attacks using VBIEDs.

• Attack distribution varied, with a steadily rising number of attacks in the area of Mosul in the north. Baghdad, however, was the scene of roughly twice as many attacks and incidents as the other governorates, with 300-400 a month on average. Al Anbar, Salah-al-din, and Ninewah have had roughly one-third to one half as many. Babil and Diyala average around 100 per month, lower levels of attack have taken place in Tamin and Basra.

• Attacks fit a broad pattern during the day, although 60% of the attacks reported are unspecified. Of those that do have a specific time reported, 10% are in the morning, 11% are in the afternoon, and 19% are at night.

A rough estimate of targets and casualties from September 2003 to October 2004 is shown in Figure II.1, and helps illustrate the continuing diversity of the attacks and their targets during the first periods of the insurgency:
The Course of the Insurgency in Early 2005

The insurgents made new efforts to attack both Iraqi political figures and Iraqi forces during the period before the January 30, 2005 election.

There were many attacks on election candidates and officials, and several hundred attempted and successful attacks during the campaign. In typical attack on January 16, insurgents try to assassinate Salama al-Khafaji, a candidate for the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA). Khafaji survived the attack, but many other attacks were successful. The US lost 24 men and 60 were wounded in one attack on a mess tent in Mosul on December 21, 2004. Some 68 Iraqis were killed in attacks in Karbala and Najaf a few days earlier, and some 175 wounded. Coalition forces, backed by elements of Iraqi forces, were able to secure the country on election day, but only by pouring forces into the field and largely shutting down most movements along Iraqi roads and in Iraqi cities.

During the first two weeks of 2005, insurgent attacks included:

- **January 2, 2005:** A suicide bomber killed 18 National Guardsmen and a civilian in Balad.
- **January 4, 2005:** Insurgents assassinated the governor of Baghdad province. Zarqawi’s group, calling itself Al Qa’ida in Iraq, claimed responsibility. Attacks throughout the country left five US and 13 Iraqi servicemen dead.
- **January 10, 2005:** Insurgents gunned down Baghdad’s deputy police chief and his son. Two US soldiers died when a roadside bomb exploded in Baghdad.
- **January 12, 2005:** An ambush on a U.S.-Iraqi convoy in Mosul killed two Iraqi soldiers.
• **January 13, 2005**: A senior aide to Ayatollah Ali Sistani was assassinated in Salman Pak, a city south of Baghdad. Gunmen kill the director of a Baghdad election center.

The Uncertain Impact of the January 30, 2005 Election

While Sunnis largely boycotted the January 30, 2005 election, it did have broad enough Shi'ite and Kurdish support to convince some observers that the insurgency was weakening, and the Sunnis had no choice other than to join the Iraqi political process. For example, the Iraqi Interim Government stated in early 2005 that some 16 of Iraq’s 18 provinces were secure. While these claims were somewhat exaggerated, there was a significant level of security in 10 to 12 provinces. However, the insurgency was clearly not defeated, and was still capable of attacks in supposedly safe Shi’ite and Kurdish areas.

US intelligence experts were far less sanguine. Vice Admiral Lowell E. Jacoby, the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, summarized the state of the insurgency as follows in February 2005:

The insurgency in Iraq has grown in size and complexity over the past year. Attacks numbered approximately 25 per day one year ago. Today, they average in the 60s. Insurgents have demonstrated their ability to increase attacks around key events such as the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) transfer of power, Ramadan, and the recent election. Attacks on Iraq’s election day reached approximately 300, double the previous one-day’s high of approximately 150 reached during last year’s Ramadan,

The pattern of attacks remains the same as last year. Approximately 80 percent of all attacks occur in Sunni dominated central Iraq. The Kurdish north and Shi'a south remain relatively calm. Coalition forces continue to be the primary targets. Iraqi Security Forces and Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) officials are attacked to intimidate the Iraqi people and undermine control and legitimacy. Attacks against foreign nationals are intended to intimidate non-government organizations and contractors and inhibit reconstruction and recovery. Attacks against the country’s infrastructure, especially electricity and the oil industry, are intended to stall economic recovery, increase popular discontent, and further undermine support for the IIG and Coalition.

Recent polls show confidence in the Iraqi Interim Government remains high in Kurdish communities and low in Sunni areas. Large majorities across all groups opposed attacks on Iraqi Security Forces and Iraqi and foreign civilians. Majorities of all groups placed great importance in the election. Sunni concern over election security likely explains the relatively poor showing by the Sunni electorate in comparison with the Shi'a and Kurdish groups. Confidence in Coalition Forces is low. Most Iraqis see them as occupiers and a major cause of the insurgency.

We believe Sunni Arabs, dominated by Ba’athist and Former Regime Elements (FRE), compromise the core of the insurgency. Ba’athist/FRE and Sunni Arab networks are likely collaborating, providing funds and guidance across family, tribal, religious and peer group lines. Some coordination between Sunni and Shi'a groups is also likely.

Militant Shi'a elements, including those associated with Moqtada al Sadr, have periodically fought the Coalition. Following the latest round of fighting last August and September, we judge Sadr’s forces are re-arming, re-organizing and training. Sadr is keeping his options open to either participate in the political process or employ his forces. Shi'a militants will remain a significant threat to the political process and fractures within the Shi'a community are a concern.

Jihadists, such as al-Qa'ida operative Abu Musab al Zarqawi, are responsible for many high-profile attacks. While Jihadist activity accounts for only a faction of the overall violence, the strategic and symbolic nature of their attacks, combined with effective Information Operations, has a disproportionate impact.

Foreign fighters are a small component of the insurgency and comprise a very small percentage of all detainees. Syrian, Saudi, Egyptian, Jordanian and Iranian nationals make up the majority of foreign fighters. Fighters, arms and other supplies continue to enter Iraq from virtually all of its neighbors despite increased border security.

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Insurgent groups will continue to use violence to attempt to protect Sunni Arab interests and regain dominance, provoke civil war, and/or serve the interests of Neo-Salafi Sunni extremism. Subversion and infiltration of emerging government institutions, security and intelligence services will be a major problem for the new government. Jihadists will continue to attack in Iraq in pursuit of their long-term goals. Challenges to reconstruction, economic development and employment will continue. The keys to success will remain improving security with an Iraqi lead, rebuilding the civil infrastructure and economy and creating a political process that all major ethnic and sectarian groups see as legitimate.

Nevertheless, Administration spokespersons and several senior US officers stated that the insurgency was losing ground. This, in part, was the result of the fact the US policymakers still focused more on the number of ex-Ba’athist leaders and insurgents it killed or captured at a time the insurgency was becoming steadily more Islamist extremist.

In making such claims, US sources noted that prior to the Iraqi election:

- Some 40-60 towns and cities have been the scene of attacks each week since late August. Many are outside the “Sunni Triangle” and Al Anbar Province.
- The most violent city in terms of number of major incidents has been Baghdad, with 20-40 attacks a week.
- Mosul is second with 4-13 major attacks per week.
- The level of attacks in Basra has been relatively low by comparison, but peaks of 7 attacks per week have occurred in Basra and its environs.

In contrast, they stated that after the Iraqi election:

- Attacks against US soldiers per day have fallen to between 40 and 50. US officials state that this is approximately ½ the level one year ago.
- Approximately ½ of the attacks that due occur cause no casualties or property damage.

**A New Resurgence of Sectarian Violence**

By February 2005, it was clear that the violence had not abated. More than 130 Iraqis were killed in a 7-day period in early February:

- **February 3, 2005:** Insurgents killed 12 Iraqi soldiers in an ambush south of Kirkuk, executing the unarmed men one by one in the street.
  - Five policemen and a National Guardsman were killed in Baghdad.
- **February 6, 2005:** Insurgents attacked a convoy of trucks hauling cars destined for Iraq’s Ministry of the Interior. The truck drivers were kidnapped and the cars destroyed.
- **February 7, 2005:** At least 27 Iraqis died in two suicide bombings, one targeted policemen collecting paychecks near a Mosul hospital, and the other a police post in Baquba.
- **February 8, 2005:** A suicide bomb struck Baghdad’s National Guard volunteer center, killing at least 20 potential recruits.
- **February 9, 2005:** Masked gunmen killed a television correspondent working for the American-funded network Al Hurra and his 3-year-old son in Basra.
  - In Baghdad, insurgents assassinated a director of the Ministry of Housing and three Kurdistan Democratic Party officials. Zarqawi’s group claimed responsibility.
  - 10 British soldiers died when a C-130 crashed.
- **February 10, 2005:** On the first day of the Muslim New Year, insurgent violence claimed more than 50 lives throughout Iraq.
• **February 11, 2005:** Insurgents attacked three Shi’ite targets – a mosque and two bakeries – in central Iraq, killing at least 21.

What was equally clear was that the insurgents had established a pattern of attacks designed to divide Iraq along sectarian and ethnic lines. The drive to push Iraqi towards an intense and full-scale civil war was already underway, and had actually begun in 2003. This pattern becomes all too clear from a chronology of the key suicide bombings to date:

• Aug. 19, 2003: A truck bomb explodes outside the U.N. headquarters building in Baghdad, killing 22 people.

• Aug. 29, 2003: A car bomb explodes outside mosque in Najaf, killing more than 85 people, including Shi’ite leader Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim. Although officials never gave a final death toll, there were suspicions it may have been higher.

• Oct. 27, 2003: Four suicide bombings target International Red Cross headquarters and four Iraqi police stations in Baghdad, killing 40 people, mostly Iraqis.


• Feb. 10, 2004: Suicide bomber explodes a truckload of explosives outside a police station in Iskandariyah, killing 53 people.

• Feb. 11, 2004: Suicide attacker blows up a car packed with explosives in a crowd of Iraqis waiting outside an army recruiting center in Baghdad, killing 47 people.

• March 2, 2004: Coordinated blasts from suicide bombers, mortars and planted explosives strike Shi’ite Muslim shrines in Karbala and in Baghdad, killing at least 181 and wounding 573.

• April 21, 2004: Five blasts near police stations and police academy in southern city of Basra kill at least 55 people.

• July 29, 2004: A suicide car bomb devastates a busy street in Baquba, killing 70 people.

• Aug. 26, 2004: A mortar barrage slams into a mosque filled with Iraqis preparing to march on the embattled city of Najaf, killing 27 people and wounding 63.

• Sept. 14, 2004: A car bomb rips through a busy market near a Baghdad police headquarters where Iraqis were waiting to apply for jobs, and gunmen open fire on a van carrying police home from work in Baquba, killing at least 59 people total and wounding at least 114.


• Dec. 19, 2004: Car bombs tear through a Najaf funeral procession and Karbala's main bus station, killing at least 60 people and wounding more than 120 in the two Shi’ite holy cities.

• Feb. 8, 2005: A suicide bomber blows himself up in the middle of a crowd of army recruits, killing 21 people.

• Feb. 18, 2005: Two suicide bombers attack two mosques, leaving 28 people dead, while an explosion near a Shi’ite ceremony kills two other people.

• Feb. 28, 2005: A suicide car bomber targets mostly Shi’ite police and National Guard recruits in Hillah, killing 125 and wounding more than 140. Some of the dead and injured are at a nearby market.

• March 10, 2005: A suicide bomber blows himself up at a Shi’ite mosque during a funeral in the northern city of Mosul, killing at least 47 people and wounding more than 100.

• April 24, 2005: Insurgents stage coordinated double-bombings in Tikrit and a Shi’ite neighborhood in Baghdad, killing a total of 29 Iraqis and injuring 74.
• May 1, 2005: A car bomb obliterates a tent crowded with mourners for the funeral of a Kurdish official in the northern city of Tal Afar, killing 25 people and wounding more than 50.
• May 4, 2005: Bomb explodes among Iraqi civilians applying for police jobs in Kurdish city of Irbil, killing 60 people and wounding some 150.
• July 16, 2005: Suicide bomber detonates explosives strapped to his body at a gas station near a Shi’ite mosque in central city of Musayyib, blowing up a fuel tanker and killing at least 54 people and wounded it least 82.

Even so, the US continued to make efforts to “spin” the course of the insurgency in a favorable way. On February 17, 2005, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld told the Senate Armed Service Committee that classified estimates on the size of the insurgency were not static, but rather “a moving target.” In the same session, General Richard Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, also avoided hard numbers but described the insurgency as having limited capabilities; meaning that the insurgency could now "only" mount around 50 to 60 attacks on any given day.

Lt. General John F. Sattler, the head of the USMC Expeditionary Force said in March that insurgent attacks were averaging only 10 per day, with two producing significant casualties, versus 25 per day, with five producing significant casualties, before the battle of Fallujah in November 2004.

**Warnings that Iraqi Forces Could Feed the Insurgency**

There also were early warnings that the effort to create Iraqi forces could feed the insurgency unless truly national forces were created that did not abuse Iraqi civilians or support sectarian and ethnic causes. The US State Department human rights report for 2004 noted that Iraqi forces must operate in a climate of extraordinary violence and extremism on the part of their opponents, and make protecting Iraqi civilians their primary mission. It also, however, sounded an important warning about the actions of Iraqi police, security, and National Guard actions through December 31, 2004.\(^{56}\)

With the ongoing insurgency limiting access to information, a number of instances in the Report have been difficult to verify. However, there were reports of arbitrary deprivation of life, torture, impunity, and poor prison conditions—particularly in pretrial detention facilities—and arbitrary arrest and detention. There remained unresolved problems relating to the large number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Corruption at all levels of the Government remained a problem. Some aspects of the judicial system were dysfunctional, and there were reports that the judiciary was subject to external influence. The exercise of labor rights remained limited, largely due to violence, unemployment, and maladapted organizational structures and laws; however, with international assistance, some progress was underway at year's end.

…With the ongoing insurgency, there was a climate of extreme violence in which persons were killed for political and other reasons. There were occasional reports of killings particularly at the local level by the Government or its agents, which may have been politically motivated. In early December, Basrah police reported that officers in the Internal Affairs Unit were involved in the killings of 10 members of the Ba'ath Party. Basrah police also reported that the same Internal Affairs Unit officers were involved in the killings of a mother and daughter accused of engaging in prostitution. The Basrah Chief of Intelligence was removed from his position as a result of the accusations; however, he retained command of the Internal Affairs Unit. An MOI investigation into the Basrah allegations was ongoing at year's end. Other instances reflected arbitrary actions by government agents. For example, on October 16, Baghdad police arrested, interrogated, and killed 12 kidnappers of 3 police officers.

… The TAL expressly prohibits torture in all its forms under all circumstances, as well as cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.
According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), during this reporting period, torture and ill treatment of detainees by police was commonplace. In interviews with 90 prisoners conducted from August to October, 72 reported that they had been tortured or mistreated. The abuses included some instances of beatings with cables and hosepipes, electric shocks to their earlobes and genitals, food and water deprivation, and overcrowding in standing room only cells.

Additionally, HRW reported that specialized agencies, including the Major Crimes Unit, Criminal Intelligence, Internal Affairs and possibly the Intelligence Service, were responsible for pretrial irregularities, such as arrest without warrant, lengthy periods of detention before referral to an investigative judge, and the denial of contact with family and legal counsel. Although detainees were primarily criminal suspects, they also included others, such as members of the Mahdi Militia and juveniles, who sometimes were caught in arrest sweeps.

There were instances of illegal treatment of detainees. For example, on November 1, Baghdad police arrested two Coalition Force citizen interpreters on charges involving the illegal use of small arms. After their arrest, police bound the detainees' arms behind them, pulling them upward with a rope and cutting off their circulation. This treatment was followed by beatings over a 48-hour period with a steel cable, in an effort to make the detainees confess. Both interpreters required medical treatment after their release to Coalition Forces. No further information on the incident was available at year's end. In another case, the Commission on Public Integrity (CPI) gathered enough evidence to prosecute police officers in Baghdad who were systematically raping and torturing female detainees. Two of the officers received prison sentences; four others were demoted and reassigned.

There were also allegations that local police sometimes used excessive force against both citizens and foreigners. On November 28, a foreign national reported that police beat him at a police station in Kufa. According to the victim, he witnessed police beating detainees at a police station while he was filing a claim on another matter. When he questioned the treatment of the detainees, he was beaten and detained for 4 hours.

A number of complaints about Iraqi National Guard (ING) abuses surfaced during the year. For example, in November, the ING raided a house in southern Baghdad and arrested four alleged insurgents. The family was evicted and the ING burnt the house. In another incident, a doctor at the al-Kindi hospital in Baghdad said that the ING had tried to force him to treat one of their colleagues before other more serious cases. When he refused, they beat him. There also were many reported instances of ING looting and burning houses in Fallujah in November.

According to an ING official, disciplinary procedures were in place to deal with the mistreatment of citizens and a number of members of the ING were fired during the year for violations.

There were numerous reports and direct evidence that insurgents employed multiple forms of torture and inhumane treatment against their victims...Although there was significant improvement in Iraqi Corrections Service (ICS) prison conditions following the fall of the former regime, in many instances the facilities did not meet international penal standards. According to the Government, it generally permitted visits by independent human rights observers. In August, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) visited ICS facilities. The Ministry of Human Rights established a permanent office at the Abu Ghraib prison. HRW visited some ICS facilities.

After the fall of the former regime, prison functions were consolidated into the Ministry of Justice, and the ICS was transferred from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs to the Ministry of Justice. According to the Government, ICS confined civilians under the rule of law, and a valid confinement order from a judge was required. Confinement was not connected with military intelligence operations nor was there any contact with military confinement functions.

...Allegations of inmate abuse by ICS Officers continued, although fewer than in the previous year. The ICS Internal Affairs Division claimed it conducted investigations of all detected or reported cases and that appropriate corrective action was taken if an allegation was verified. Although fewer than 10 cases were investigated between July and December, an individual with access to human rights complaints alleged that hundreds of cases were pending accusing ICS officers of abuse and torture of detainees and prisoners, including women. No further information was available at year's end.
...At year's end, ICS was investigating eight cases in which inmates alleged police pre-detention abuse and torture. Overcrowding was a problem. Inmate disturbances and riots reduced available prison beds by approximately one-third, and pretrial detention facilities were often overcrowded. The insurrections in Sadr City and later in Najaf created additional overcrowding in detention facilities.

...Detainees were generally retained in custody pending the outcome of a criminal investigation. Individuals were generally arrested openly and warrants were issued only with sufficient evidence, although, there were numerous reports of arbitrary arrest and detention.

There were no publicized cases of criminal proceedings brought against members of the security forces in connection with alleged violations of these rights, nor were there publicly known measures adopted to prevent recurrence.

Due to the insurgency, high-crime rates, and limited police training, innocent persons were sometimes arrested and detained erroneously.

...The MOI's responsibilities extended only to internal security. MOI commands a number of uniformed forces, including the Iraqi Police Service (IPS) and Department of Border Enforcement. The MOI also has criminal and domestic intelligence capabilities and regulates all domestic and foreign private security companies operating in the country. The MOI also has authority over the Civil Defense Directorate, the firefighters and emergency response organization, and the Facilities Protection Service shielding strategic infrastructure, government buildings, and cultural and educational assets.

...In the aftermath of the fall of the former regime, a police presence temporarily vanished, except in the Kurdish North. Police equipment was stolen. After April 2003, a large recruitment and training program was established, including hiring former police officers.

During the year, various specialized units were created, including an Emergency Response Unit (with capabilities similar to a SWAT team) and Public Order Battalions that perform riot control functions, as well as specialized counterinsurgency units.

More than any other group, the police have been a target of terrorist attacks. Over 1,500 IPS personnel have been killed between April 2003 and year's end. Additionally, pervasive lawlessness has led to an increase in violent and organized crime, particularly related to kidnappings.

...There was a widespread perception that police made false arrests to extort money. Some police officers did not present defendants to magistrates and held them in detention cells until their families paid bribes for their release. In the Central Criminal Court in Baghdad, the time between arrest and arraignment was often in excess of 30 days, despite the 24-hour requirement.

There were organized police abuses. For example, on September 4, approximately 150 police, none of whom had uniforms or badges, surrounded the Iraqi Institute of Peace (IIP), which is associated with the International Center for Reconciliation of the Coventry Cathedral, in response to an alert that a prominent former regime figure might be inside the Cathedral. Four individuals identified themselves as MOI officials, but did not show badges. Armed men, some with heavy weapons, broke down the doors and ransacked the IIP building, stealing phones and money. The incident ended with no serious injuries but without judicial follow-up.

On August 16, a ministry, reportedly wishing to occupy the real property used by a political party, caused party members to be arrested and detained for almost 60 days without charges. During their detention, a habeas corpus writ from the Chief Investigative Judge of the Central Criminal Court was ignored. The minister involved also refused to appear before the judge to explain his ministry's actions. The political party members were eventually released; however, the property involved remained under the control of the ministry at year's end.

...Reportedly, coerced confessions and interrogation continued to be the favored method of investigation by police. According to one government official, hundreds of cases were pending at year's end alleging torture. There have been several arrests, and both criminal and administrative punishments were handed out to police in cases where allegations of torture were substantiated.
Additionally, corruption continued to be a problem with the police. The CPI was investigating cases of police abuse involving unlawful arrests, beatings, and the theft of valuables from the homes of persons who were detained; however, the police often continued to use the methods employed by the previous regime. In addition to the CPI, several other mechanisms were put into place to address this problem, including an internal affairs capability, mentoring, and training programs that focus on accountability.

...Efforts to increase the capacity and effectiveness of the police were ongoing; however, there was little indication that the IIG took sufficient steps to address this problem adequately or to reinforce publicly the message that there will be no climate of impunity.

Because of arbitrary arrest and detention practices, some prisoners were held in incommunicado detention.

...Lengthy pretrial detention continued to be a significant problem due to backlogs in the judiciary and slow processing of criminal investigations. Approximately 3,000 inmates were in pretrial detention, and 1,000 were held post-trial.

...Corruption remained a problem in the criminal justice system. In the fall, the MOI referred allegations of misconduct involving a judge to the COJ. The allegations concerned professional misconduct; including bribery. At year's end, this case was still pending...

The Overall Trends in the Insurgency During 2004

Figure II.2 shows how the war intensified from early 2004 to early 2005. As shown, insurgent attacks against Iraqi security forces increased dramatically during the final months of 2004. The insurgents began to focus on softer, easier Iraqi targets rather than well-trained and well-equipped US forces after the January 30, 2004 elections.

As the numbers of Iraqi forces grew, they invariably became a more visible target for insurgents. In addition, while the US became more adept at protecting its own forces from roadside attacks, many routine and vulnerable missions have been turned over to ISF. Insurgents found that Iraqi forces were easier targets and adjusted their tactics accordingly, recognizing that once the US and Coalition forces leave Iraq the primary enemy would be the Iraqi government. One Iraqi official described the new insurgent tactic in the following way: “In the past, they were targeting the American forces because they were in charge of security...After the new Iraqi army and police were established...they shifted their attacks.”

This new focus on Iraqi targets had the short-term effect of decreasing the number of insurgent attacks against US forces by more than 25 per cent during the early months of 2005. The number of US fatalities also decreased during this period, from 107 in January 2005 to 58 in February 2005 and 36 in March 2005. However, this shift away from targeting US forces in favor of Iraqi forces was short-lived. US fatalities climbed to 52 in April and 80 in May 2005. The number of daily attacks climbed during from 45 in March to more than 60 in April. After that point, the daily number of insurgent attacks increased steadily to the point where it averaged around 100 in October 2005.

A total of 673 US troops were killed in 2005, versus 714 in 2004, and the number of wounded dropped from 7,990 to 5,639, a drop of 29%. US forces saw fewer casualties largely because more Iraqi forces were in the field and there were no major urban battles like the battle of Fallujah. US casualties also fell because the insurgents shifted to Iraqi targets that were more vulnerable and had far more political impact at a point where it have become clear that the US and its coalition partners wanted to withdraw many of their forces.

At the same time, the insurgents hit successfully at many important political and economic targets. Sunni insurgents continued to strike successfully at politically, religiously, and ethnically
important Shi’ite and Kurdish targets with suicide and other large bombings. They carried out a large number of successful killings, assassinations, kidnappings, extortions, and expulsions. These included an increase in the number of successful attacks on Iraqi officials, Iraqi forces, and their families.\(^{62}\)

The insurgents also continued to intimidate their fellow Sunnis. There is no way to count or fully assess the pattern of such low level attacks, or separate them from crime or Shi’ite reprisals, but no one doubts that they were a growing problem.
A New Rise in the Violence -- Post-Sovereignty: April 28, 2005-October 14, 2005

Much of the post-election optimism vanished as the spring went on. US intelligence warned that the insurgency was actually growing more serious, and that the risk of ethnic and sectarian violence was increasing. General George W. Casey, commander of MNF-I, consistently warned that the insurgency would take years to fully defeat, but stated on March 9, 2005 that “the level of attacks, the level of violence has dropped off significantly since the [Iraqi] elections.”

General Casey stated that insurgents operating from the Sunni areas had enough manpower, weaponry, ammunition, and money to launch between 50 and 60 attacks a day. Casey did, however, point to the arrest of several suspected terrorist leaders. Though the terrorists retained enough ammunition and arms to continue fighting for years, Gen. Casey maintained that the capture of certain leaders had degraded the insurgents’ abilities to fashion IEDs, the deadliest weapon confronting US troops.

The US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Richard B. Myers did claim that same week that the number of attacks had fallen to 40-50 per day, far fewer than before the elections, but roughly the same as in March 2004. The Iraqi interim Minister of the Interior, Falah al-Naqib, made similar claims, as did Lt. General Sir John Kiszeley, then the British Commander in Iraq.
Nevertheless, senior US officers like General Abizaid gave more cautious briefings in May than officers had given in February, and talked about years of combat. When Gen. Richard Myers stated in late May that the levels of insurgent attacks had decreased, the US simultaneously issued data showing their lethality had increased.

The insurgency continued to inflict severe damage on Iraq’s population in the spring of 2005. On April 13, insurgents blew up a fuel tanker in Baghdad and in a separate incident, attacked a US convoy on the road to the Baghdad International Airport, killing five Iraqis wounding four US contractors. In Kirkuk, insurgents killed 12 policemen and nine Iraqi soldiers; the latter were guarding Kirkuk’s oil fields. Insurgents also detonated explosives targeting US forces and Iraqi police in Mosul. As these attacks demonstrate, insurgents had begun to step up their attacks on fuel convoys and oil infrastructure in the northern part of the country in an effort to disrupt life for everyday Iraqis.

Islamist movements steadily increased their profile in terms of claimed attacks, media exposure, propaganda like tapes and CDs, and the use of the Internet and web sites. The ongoing insurgent attacks, and increasing sectarian and ethnic divisions delayed the government’s formation for almost three months. It was not until April 28th that pressure from Washington, Shi’ite and Kurdish leaders decided to submit an incomplete list of cabinet portfolios, rather than delay the formation of a new government any longer.

A Shi’ite-Kurdish Government Becomes a Natural Target

The sectarian and ethnic composition of the new government also made it a natural target for the insurgents. The cabinet, led by President Jalal Talabani and Prime Minister Jafaari, was clearly structured along ethnic and sectarian lines. It included 16 Shi’ites, 8 Kurds, 6 Sunni Arabs, 1 Christian and 1 Turcoman. Figure III.1 shows the breakdown along ethnic lines, and the political process provided a warning that the insurgency would find more ethnic and sectarian fault lines to exploit.

Figure III.1: Members of the Iraqi Cabinet as of May 8, 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Ethnic Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jalal Talabani</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Kurdish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibrahim al-Jaafari</td>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>Shi’ite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruz Nuri Shawis</td>
<td>Deputy Prime Minister (1)</td>
<td>Kurdish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmed Chalabi</td>
<td>Deputy Prime Minister (2)</td>
<td>Shi’ite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abid Murfak al-Jubouri</td>
<td>Deputy Prime Minister (3)</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBA*</td>
<td>Deputy Prime Minister (4)</td>
<td>TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saadoun al-Dulami</td>
<td>Defense Minister</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baqir Solagh (aka Bayan Jibr)</td>
<td>Interior Minister</td>
<td>Shi’ite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhsin Shlash</td>
<td>Electricity Minister</td>
<td>Shi’ite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdul Mottalib Ali</td>
<td>Health Minister</td>
<td>Shi’ite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Ministry</td>
<td>Sect.</td>
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<td>-------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sami al-Mudhaffar</td>
<td>Higher Education Minister</td>
<td>Shi‘ite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdul Falah Hassan</td>
<td>Education Minister</td>
<td>Shi‘ite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali Allawi</td>
<td>Finance Minister</td>
<td>Shi‘ite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jassim Jaafar</td>
<td>Construction &amp; Housing Minister</td>
<td>Shi‘ite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali al-Bahadil</td>
<td>Agriculture Minister</td>
<td>Shi‘ite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdul Hussein Shandal</td>
<td>Justice Minister</td>
<td>Shi‘ite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibrahim Bahr al-Uloum</td>
<td>Oil Minister</td>
<td>Shi‘ite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salam al-Maliki</td>
<td>Transport Minister</td>
<td>Shi‘ite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suhaila Jaafar*</td>
<td>Migration and Displacement Minister</td>
<td>Shi‘ite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdul Karim al-Inizy</td>
<td>Minister of State for National Security Affairs</td>
<td>Shi‘ite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaa Kadhim</td>
<td>Minister of State for Civil Community Affairs</td>
<td>Shi‘ite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hashim al-Hashimi</td>
<td>Minister of State for Tourism and Archaeology Affairs</td>
<td>Shi‘ite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safa al-Din al-Safi</td>
<td>Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs</td>
<td>Shi‘ite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osama al-Nujafi</td>
<td>Industry Minister</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdul Bassit Mawloud</td>
<td>Trade Minister</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nouri Farhan al-Rawi</td>
<td>Culture Minister</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azhar al-Sheikhli*</td>
<td>Minister of State for Women Affairs</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saad al-Harman</td>
<td>Minister of State for Provinces</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narmin Othman* (Temporary)</td>
<td>Human Rights Minister</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saadoun al-Dulami</td>
<td>Defense Minister</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bassima Boutros*</td>
<td>Science and Technology Minister</td>
<td>Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talib Aziz Zayni</td>
<td>Youth and Sports Minister</td>
<td>Turcoman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barham Salih</td>
<td>Minister of Planning &amp; Development Cooperation</td>
<td>Kurdish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nisrin Barwari*</td>
<td>Minister of Municipalities and Public Works</td>
<td>Kurdish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juwan Fouad Masum*</td>
<td>Telecommunications Minister</td>
<td>Kurdish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdul Latif Rashid</td>
<td>Minister of Water Resources</td>
<td>Kurdish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narmin Othman*</td>
<td>Minister of Environment</td>
<td>Kurdish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In is not surprising, therefore, that some of the deadliest attacks of the insurgency occurred during this period. Many directed were against sectarian and ethnic targets and followed by hard-line Sunni Islamist statements justifying the attacks and trying to exploit the attacks to further divide the country:

- **May 1, 2005:** A car bomb targeted a tent crowded with mourners for the funeral of a Kurdish official in the northern city of Tal Afar, killing 25 people.
- **May 4, 2005:** A bomb exploded among Iraqi civilians applying for police jobs in the Kurdish city of Irbil, killing 60.
- **May 6, 2005:** Suicide bombers killed at least 26 Iraqis and wounded several dozen more in the Shi’ite town of Suwaira. Escalating violence has killed more than 200 people since the cabinet was announced eight days ago.
- **July 16, 2005:** A suicide bomb attack near a Shi’ite mosque in Musayyib killed at least 54 people.
- **July 24, 2005:** A truck bomb outside a Baghdad police station killed 39 people.
- **August 17, 2005:** Three car bombs exploded near a bus station in Baghdad killing 43 people.
- **September 14, 2005:** A suicide car bomb struck a work site in a Shi’ite neighborhood of Baghdad, killing 112 people.
- **September 17, 2005:** A remote-controlled car bomb exploded near a market outside Baghdad, killing 30 people.
- **September 29, 2005:** Three suicide car bombs struck the Shi’ite town of Balad, killing 102 people.
- **October 11, 2005:** A suicide bomber struck an army recruiting center in Tal Afar, killing 30 people.

By April and May of 2005, it was all too clear that the election, and Coalition counterinsurgency activities, had not reduced the seriousness of the insurgency and that the insurgents had taken hold in part of Western Iraq. The US Marine Corps launched its largest offensive yet in the Syrian border area and hostile areas along the main route from Syria to Iraq in April 2005.

“Operation Matador,” and a series of follow-up attacks by Marine, US, and Iraqi forces in western Iraq, again showed that the insurgents could not survive if they stood and fought but often could if they dispersed. Iraqi forces only played a limited support role in these battles, but did deploy in greater strength in other areas. These included a major 40,000-man Iraqi security operation – called “Operation Lightning”-- in the greater Baghdad area in June 2005. This operation too had its successes, but again could not destroy insurgent activity in any given area on a lasting basis.

There were some positive indicators. Twelve of the eighteen provinces remained relatively secure. The airport road also became less dangerous. This four-lane, six-mile stretch of highway leading from Baghdad to the international airport had been one of the most dangerous roads in the country: 37 people were killed or injured in ambushes on the airport road in April 2005 alone. But that figure fell dramatically in the fall of 2005. In October, there was only one injury.
Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch attributed the improved security to the presence of more Iraqi security forces: 72

The difference is that the Iraqi police mechanized brigade actively patrols Route Irish [the name the US military gave the road] 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It transformed it from the highway of death to one of the most safe and secure routes in all of Iraq, again a tribute to the capabilities of these trained and ready police forces.

**Warnings About Iraqi Forces and the Ministry of Interior**

There also were more warnings about the role of Iraqi forces. A report by the Inspector General of the State Department and the Inspector General of the Department of Defense noted that as of late April 2005, 73

The International Police Liaison Officers’ (IPLOs) daily reports chronicle disturbing accounts of instances in which IPS personnel are not professional in the performance of their duties. There are frequent reports of breakdowns in discipline, feuds among police units, and prisoner abuse. In the absence of viable tracking systems, the IG Team is not able to determine whether or to what degree Coalition-trained police may be perpetrators of such actions. The failure to impose proper discipline rests with IPS leaders (some of whom have been directly, even violently, involved in the unseemly questionable incidents). The examples set by poor leaders for Coalition-trained personnel (mostly new recruits) bode ill.

It was not until the summer of 2005 that the special security forces of the Ministry of Interior were seen as a major source of attacks on Sunnis, and potentially reacting to Sunni attacks on Shi’ites by taking the kind of reprisals that might drive the country towards civil war. However, the appointment of Jabr to the post of Ministry of the Interior that had drawn Sunni criticism after the January elections in 2005, then became steadily more a controversial as Shi’ite-dominated MOI security forces were increasingly implicated in retaliation killings against Sunnis.

**Coalition and Iraqi Government Campaigns in the Summer and Winter of 2005**

Nevertheless, ethnic and sectarian violence increased steadily during the rest of 2005, as many aspects of Sunni Islamist extremist activity became more intense and more focused on preventing the emergence of a successful Iraqi political process and driving the country towards civil war. Low-level violence and killings increased, and these began to provoke growing Shi’ite reprisals. Elements of the police and Ministry of Interior special security forces, and the Badr Organization, increasing killed or intimidated Shi’ites in reprisal for the rise in Sunni Islamist extremist attacks on Iraqi civilians, Shi’ites and Kurds, and Iraqi politicians.

Insurgent activity forced Coalition and Iraqi forces had to start a new series of offensives in the Sunni areas in Western Iraq. In the summer 2005, US and a limited number of Iraqi forces launched a series of operations in western Iraq designed to deny insurgents a stronghold and secure the region in the run-up to the October 15th referendum on the new draft constitution.

Most operations were conducted in Al Anbar province, along the Syrian border. Coalition operation forces ranged in size from several hundred to several thousand troops:

**May 29, 2005, “Operation Moon River Dragon:**” Iraqi troops from the 203rd Army Battalion in conjunction with US soldiers from Task Force Liberty entered Al Julaam in Western Iraq looking for a suspected insurgent leader. Speaking afterwards about the operation, US Army Capt. Robert Croft said: “The [Iraqi Army] presence completely changes the dynamic of the operation. People will cooperate with us just the same. However, when Iraqi soldiers are in the lead giving the instructions,
things happen much more quickly and with less confusion. The effect is that the operation is safer for both US soldiers and Iraqi civilians.\(^{74}\)

**June 7, 2005:** US troops from 2nd Squadron, 34th Armored Cavalry Regiment and Iraqi forces from 1st Brigade, 3rd Iraqi Army Division carried out operations to disrupt anti-Iraqi forces in the southwest province of Ninewah. A joint operation launched on May 26 in Tal Afar uncovered nine weapons caches and captured 73 militants. The operations were part of 30 combined/independent operations being conducted throughout Iraq.


**June 28-July 6, 2005, “Operation Saif (Sword):”** Coalition forces conducted operations designed to root out terrorists and foreign fighters living along the Euphrates River between the cities of Haditha and Hit. There were no American or Iraqi troop fatalities.

**July 4, 2005, “Operation Muthana Strike:”** Iraqi soldiers numbering 600 joined 250 US soldiers from Task Force Baghdad in conducting searches of safe houses nearby the Baghdad International Airport, leading to the capture of 100 suspected terrorists.\(^{75}\)

**July 5, 2005, “Operation Bow Country:”** Iraqi Security Forces joined Coalition Forces in an early-morning raid in eastern Baghdad; a number of weapons and ammunition caches were uncovered.\(^{76}\)

**July 7-?, 2005, “Operation Qmtia (Scimitar):”** Approximately 100 Iraqi security forces and 500 US Marines conducted raids in Zaidon, 30 km south of Fallujah. The operation was designed to disrupt terrorist activity in the region.

**July 26-30, 2005, “Operation Thunder Cat:”** Iraqi and US soldiers conducted a series of cordon-and-attack missions resulting in the capture of 171 suspected terrorists.\(^{77}\)

**July 2005-ongoing, “Operation Hunter (Sayaid):”** The operation, intended to disrupt insurgent activities, deny freedom of movement and reduce the insurgents ability to plan future attacks, was focused around the city of Qaim and along the Syrian border. The operation was expected to last until the December 15 elections.

**August 3-10, 2005, “Operation Quick Strike:”** US-Iraqi forces conducted operations designed to root out insurgents in Haditha, Haqliniyah, and Barwanah (Parwana). The combined force of 800 US Marines and 180 Iraqi soldiers captured 36 insurgents and defused nine car bombs and more than 28 IED’s.

**August 4, 2005, “Operation Able Warrior:”** Coalition forces from Taskforce Baghdad conducted a series of raids designed to defeat insurgent forces operating west of Baghdad airport.

**September 10, 2005-?, “Operation Restoring Rights:”** U.S.-Iraqi forces totaling 8,500 entered Tal Afar in a new offensive designed to root out insurgents. The operation was expected to last several weeks. Tal Afar was home to roughly 500 insurgents

**September 11, 2005, “Operation Zoba’a (Cyclone):”** US and Iraqi forces conducted a series of raids designed to root out Al Qu’ida in Iraq insurgents operating in Rutbah.

**September 14, 2005, “Operation Flea Flicker:”** US and Iraqi forces searched houses in Zafaraniya, as part of an attempt to disrupt anti-Iraqi activity in the area in preparation for the October 15 constitutional referendum. Coalition forces detained several suspected insurgents and uncovered a number of weapons caches.\(^{78}\)

**October 1-6, 2005, “Operation Kabda Bil Hadid (Iron Fist):”** US and Iraqi forces carried out operations in Anbar Province. More than 1,000 US troops moved into the town of Sa’dah, in the al Qaim region, near the Syrian border. Other cities targeted included Karabilah and Ubaydi. The goal of
the operation was to interdict foreign fighters and provide security for the upcoming referendum. More than 50 Al Qa‘ida in Iraq terrorists are killed.

**October 4, 2005, “Operation River Gate:”** In the largest operation of 2005 (and the second in western Iraq this week), US forces numbering 2,500 and Iraqi security forces carried out raids designed to deny insurgents the ability to operate in the Euphrates River towns of Haditha, Haqlaniyah and Barwanah (Parwana).

**October 28-29, 2005, “Operation Clean Sweep:”** Task Force Baghdad soldiers along with Iraqi Security Forces targeted more than 350 houses in southern Baghdad, capturing 49 terror suspects. 79

**November 5-22 2005, “Operation Al Hajip Elfalathi (Steel Curtain):”** 2,500 US soldiers along with 1,000 Iraqi Army soldiers launched attacks in western Al-Anbar province. The operation was designed to restore security along the Iraqi-Syrian border and was the largest Coalition operation in months. 80

**November 16, 2005, “Operation Numur (Panthers):”** The first of five operations involving Iraqi and US soldiers was launched. The operations, centered on Ramadi, were intended to secure the area for the upcoming December elections.

**November 19-21, 2005, “Operation Dhibbah (Bruins):”** Approximately 150 Iraqi Army soldiers and 300 Marines conducted operations in northern Ramadi as part of efforts to block off known terrorist escape routes. 81

**November 23-24, 2005, “Operation Asad (Lions):”** 200 Iraqi Army soldiers along with 250 US soldiers conducted operations in the Tamim area of southern Ramadi. It was the third such series of disruption operations aimed at capturing or killing terrorists in the Ramadi area. 82

**November 26-?, 2005, “Operation Nimur (Tigers):”** 550 Iraqi Army soldiers along with soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team carried out operations in the Ma‘Laab District of eastern Ramadi aimed at securing the conditions for a successful December 15 election. 83

**December 2-? 2005, “Operation Harba (Shank):”** 200 Iraqi Army soldiers and 300 Marines carried out operations in Al Anbar’s capital of Ramadi. Operation Shank was the fifth in a series of operations aimed at disrupting terrorist groups in the area.

These operations had some positive impacts. In early September 2005, for example, US and Iraqi forces began “Operation Restoring Rights” on the insurgent stronghold of Tal Afar. It was the largest to-date urban assault since Fallujah. Troops faced little resistance, suspecting that most insurgents fled the city during the pre-assault evacuation of civilians. The developments in the fight for Tal Afar had the following impact:

- 157 terrorists were killed, 291 others were arrested. One Iraqi serviceman and six civilians were killed.
- In al-Sarai district of Tal-Afar, explosives were planted in most of the houses, which led to the destruction of 10-12 houses in the area.
- Dozens of other houses were destroyed in the last three months during combat operations. 10-15 thousand USD will be paid for the families who lost their homes.
- 20 trucks of supplies arrived in Tal-Afar from Baghdad. Ten ambulances were sent from Mosul to the nearby town. About 1,000 tents have been provided for the refugees who fled their town of Tal-Afar and seven medical facilities have been set on the outskirts of the northern town.
- The Iraqi government said it would deploy peacekeeping forces into the town of Tal-Afar after the combat operations in the region are over. In addition, it said that 1,000 residents of the town would be trained to maintain security and that tribes based in area will also play a major role in maintaining security and stability. 84
The end result, however, was simply another cycle in the violence. The debate over Iraq’s new constitution and the October 15, 2005 referendum on the constitution made some political progress, but also divided Sunnis, Shi’ites, and Kurds over a host of issues including federation, the role of religion in the state, control of state revenues, and control of oil revenues.

The end result was a new wave of attacks on both Iraqi and US targets. The September death toll for US soldiers was 49, down from 85 in August. But those numbers do not tell the whole story. US fatalities in Iraq fluctuated throughout most of the summer in 2005, with no clear pattern discernable. 78 US soldiers were killed in June. The death toll for July was 54. The death toll for October was 92, nearly a 50 percent increase from the previous month. October was the second-deadliest month for US troops in 2005, second only to January. It was the fourth deadliest month since the war began. November’s death toll was 85.

The insurgents also learned how to cooperate more effectively in achieving these ends, particularly the more organized Islamist extremist elements. The major Sunni Islamist extremist groups formed a loose alliance and informal "majlis." They developed a more sophisticated military literature and a wide range of training aids. They have begun to post battle-by-battle summaries of the lessons to be learned from each major encounter with Coalition and Iraqi forces, analyses drawn from other conflicts, and various manuals. Videotapes and DVDs supplemented these efforts. While some remained basic, others became highly sophisticated – reflecting the growing military background and expertise of some of the insurgents involved.85
Operation Iron Fist, River Gate and Steel Curtain (October and November 2005)

Coalition and Iraqi efforts further intensified in the late fall of 2005, in response to both new increases in insurgent violence, and as part of an effort to prepare for the election on December 15th. Operation Iron Fist, River Gate and Steel Curtain were part of larger, ongoing operations, known as Sayaid (Hunter), launched in mid-to-late summer 2005. The western part of Iraq’s Al-Anbar province was a key target because it had become a center of insurgent operations that had increasingly been driven westward.

Some US officials believed the insurgents had found their last foothold in the area along the border with Syria. In late summer 2005, there were reports that insurgents loyal to Zarqawi – or at least key Sunni Islamist extremist groups claiming some affiliation to Al Qa’ida -- had taken over at least five Iraqi towns on the border with Syria. The insurgents, estimated to number between 300 and 400, were reported to be distributing “death letters” in which they ordered residents to leave their homes or face death.

According to Lt. Col. Julian Alford, commander of the 3rd Battalion, 6th Marines Regiment stationed near Qaim, “It appears that al Qa’ida in Iraq is kicking out local people from a lot of these towns out there.” US forces in the region, numbering 1,000 at the time, estimated that as many as 100 families per day were fleeing their homes. Fighters loyal to Zarqawi had been in complete control of the area for at least a month. No Iraqi soldiers or police officers were believed to be operating inside the towns of Dulayym al Husayba, Karabila, Sada and Al Ubaydi.86
In late September, The Washington Post reported that a gradual buildup of US and Iraqi forces in the Euphrates River valley was underway. US officials reported that the move was aimed at securing the border area around Qaim and suppressing other insurgency activity in the region.\textsuperscript{87} The move appears to have been undertaken in preparation for Operation Al Hajip Elfulathi (Steel Curtain), launched in the western part of Al-Anbar province on November 5, 2005. Operation Steel Curtain, like Operations Iron Fist and River Gate before it, is part of the larger Operation Hunter. Steel Curtain involved 2,500 US soldiers and 1,000 Iraqi Army soldiers and was designed to restore security along the Iraqi-Syrian border. Operation Steel Curtain concluded on November 22. During the 17-day operation, more than 139 terrorists were killed and 256 detained.

The offensives continued until the December 15 elections. They involved a wide range of efforts to secure hostile towns and cities and interdict insurgent movements. In July, for example, an Army squadron of Stryker vehicles set up an outpost near the town of Rawah, as part of the first phase of the operation. More than 1,000 US troops along with a battalion from the Iraqi Intervention Force cordoned off traffic in the area. In September, US warplanes blew up two small bridges in the towns of Karabilah and New Ubaydi, forcing all traffic in the region to use the US controlled Rawah river crossing.\textsuperscript{88}

Air Force Brigadier General C.D. Alston said in late December that these joint operations were one of several factors contributing to what he characterized as the diminishing capability of insurgents to sustain attacks. He stated this was a key measure of effectiveness studied by US officials when evaluating the strength of the insurgency.\textsuperscript{89} Yet, none of the data discussed earlier or later in this report show any such pattern. The Coalition offensives, and constant pressure from other attacks on the insurgents, certainly had a major impact in limiting what the insurgency could do. At the same time, most major insurgent groups and cells remained intact, and the offensives taught the insurgents how to disperse, be less vulnerable and use other patterns of attack. They did not reduce the drift towards sectarian and ethnic conflict.

**The Period Before the Elections: October 15, 2005-December 15, 2005**

The various elements of the insurgency differed over how to deal with the December 15th parliamentary elections. Several Sunni nationalist insurgent groups appeared to have struck a deal with US officials that amounted to a short-term ceasefire to enable a relatively peaceful election period. One self-identified insurgent field commander told Time Magazine he had been given orders not to conduct attacks in the four days surrounding the election date.\textsuperscript{90} There are several logical reasons to explain such a course of action:

- Both Al Qa‘ida in Iraq and Sunni nationalist insurgents stated that they did not want to injure Sunnis who might go to the polls on Election Day.
- Several Sunni groups appeared to be tacitly encouraging Sunni voters so as to secure a place in the Iraqi government, unlike last January’s election.
- Other Sunni groups may have made the tactical decision to wait out elections and then declare them illegitimate no matter what the results and resume attacks.
- Other Sunni groups may have made the calculation that the election results could never satisfy Sunni voters. By waiting until the vote is over, such groups could then claim to have given democracy a chance, perhaps garnering renewed Sunni support.
• It is likely that insurgent groups were deterred from attacks by the ban on motor vehicles and the massive security presence on Election Day.

Strategic considerations may have played a role in insurgent decisions to implement a short-term ceasefire, but it is likely that tight security measures deterred them as well. US forces increased to about 160,000 for the December 15 election, although they dropped to 138,000 (pre-election levels) in the first quarter of 2006. Over 230,000 Iraqi soldiers and police were set up in what was called the “ring system” of defense in which police were stationed inside the polling stations, special battalions outside to man checkpoints and conduct searches, and beyond them Iraqi Army battalions and Coalition forces waited as a last resort. In addition, all traffic was prohibited near polling places and between provinces.

Nevertheless, some of the deadliest attacks to date occurred during the election campaign:

- **October 31, 2005:** A car bomb exploded in Basra killing at least 20 people.
- **November 2, 2005:** A suicide bomber detonated a minibus near an outdoor market south of Baghdad, killing 20 people.
- **November 10, 2005:** A suicide bomber struck a Baghdad restaurant popular with police, killing 35 people.
- **November 18, 2005:** Near-simultaneous suicide bombings killed 74 worshippers at two Shi’ite mosques near the Iranian border.
- **November 19, 2005:** A suicide bomber detonated his car in a crowd of Shi’ite Muslim mourners north of Baghdad, killing at least 36 people.
- **November 24, 2005:** A suicide bomber blew up his car outside a hospital south of Baghdad, killing 30 people.
- **December 4, 2005:** Supporters of Moqtada al-Sadr threw shoes and stones at former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi as he enters the Grand Imam Ali shrine in Najaf to pray. Later that day, gunmen fire an RPG at his party offices in Najaf. No one is injured.
- **December 6, 2005:** Two suicide bombers detonated their explosives at Baghdad’s police academy, killing at least 43 people.
- **December 8, 2005:** A suicide bomber detonated his explosives on a bus in Baghdad, killing 32 people and wounding 44 others.

According to statistics obtained by the Agence-France Presse from the Iraqi Ministry of Defense, 5,713 Iraqis were killed in 2005, not including insurgents. This included 4,020 civilians, and 1,693 ISF. The MOD and MOI recorded 1,702 insurgents killed and 9264 detained.

More generally, MNF-I intelligence estimated that the number of insurgent attacks on coalition forces, Iraqi forces, and Iraqi civilians; and acts of sabotage; rose by 29% in 2005. The total had risen from 26,496 in 2004 to 34,131 in 2005. (The Coalition reported that these attacks have had a relatively consistent average success rate of 24%; attacks that cause damage or casualties.) Put differently, the average number of attacks per month in the Coalition count (which tended to undercount attacks on Iraqi civilians) had risen from an average of around 750 in late 2004 to a peak of nearly 3,000 in October 2005, and was 2,500 in December 2005. The average had been well over 2,000 per month from April 2004 onwards.

The continuing shift to attacks on Iraqis, rather than Coalition troops, also again shifted the balance of casualties. A total of 673 US troops were killed in 2005, versus 714 in 2004, and the...
number of wounded dropped from 7,990 to 5,639, a drop of 29%.

US forces saw fewer casualties largely because more Iraqi forces were in the field and there were no major urban battles like the battle of Fallujah. Additionally, the insurgents shifted to Iraqi targets that were more vulnerable and had far more political impact at a point where it had become clear that the US and its coalition partners wanted to withdraw many of their forces.

**The December 15 Election and Implications for the Insurgency**

Like the other major political events before it, the December 15, 2005 election did not have a stabilizing effect or clearly undercut support for the insurgency. While Many Sunnis did participate in the political process for the first time, Iraqis voted along sectarian and ethnic lines.

The new Council of Representatives had 275 seats. The United Iraqi Alliance, the Shi’ite coalition party won 5.2 million votes and 128 seats in the parliament. The Kurdish Alliance won 2.6 million votes and 53 seats. The Sunni dominated Iraqi Accordance Front won 1.8 million votes and 44 seats in parliament. The Sunni Iraqi National Dialogue Front, a coalition of Sunni groups received nearly 500,000 votes and 11 parliamentary seats and the secular Iraqi National List won 25 seats.

Although charges of fraud delayed the final certification of the election results until February 9, 2006, such fraud was found to be minor and did not change the results. This result allocated seats to the main parties as follows: Shi’ites 47%; Kurds 21%, Sunnis 21%, Allawi’s secular nationalists 9% and other groups 1%.

Map II.1 shows Iraq’s provinces. Figure II.4 breaks down the election results by ethnic and sectarian groups and compares those numbers to Iraqi population as a whole. Figure II.5 shows the percentage of the vote won by the four major coalition parties in each of Iraq’s 18 provinces.

US Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad described the results as unsurprising, “Given that Saddam for decades purposely fostered a lack of trust among communities.” He also noted, however, that cooperation had to be forged across ethnic and sectarian divisions for a unified Iraq to remain possible and if the government was to address the issues at the root of the political conflict.
Map II.1: Governorate Boundaries
Figure II.4: December 2005 Election Results: Composition of the Council of Representatives

### Figure II.5: Election Results, January and December 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slate/Party</th>
<th>Seats Jan. 05</th>
<th>Seats Dec. 05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Iraqi Alliance (Shi’ite)</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurdistan Alliance (PUK and KDP)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqis List (secular, Allawi)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi Concord Front (Sunni)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue National Iraqi Front (Sunni)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi National Congress (was part of UIA in Jan. vote)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqis Party (Yawar, Sunni; was part of Iraqis List in Dec. vote)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi Turkomen Front (Turkomen, Kirkuk based)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Independent and Elites (Jan)/Risalyun (Dec) (pro-Sadr)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s Union (Communist, non-sectarian; on Iraqis List in Dec. vote)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurdistan Islamic Group (Islamic Kurd)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Action (Shi’ite Islamist, Karbala)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Democratic Alliance (secular)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafidain National List (Assyrian)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberation and Reconciliation Gathering (Sunni, secular)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ummah Party (secular)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yazidi List (Kuridish)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure II.6: Percentage of Vote Won by Four Major Coalition Parties in Each of Iraq’s 18 Provinces.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>United Iraqi Coalition/United Iraqi Alliance</th>
<th>Kurdistan Gathering/Kurdistan Alliance</th>
<th>Tawafiq Iraqi Front/Iraqi Accordance Font</th>
<th>National Iraqi List</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basrah</td>
<td>77.5</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>11.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missan</td>
<td>86.91</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>4.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theqar</td>
<td>86.74</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>5.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muthana</td>
<td>86.45</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qadissiya</td>
<td>81.47</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>7.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Najaf</td>
<td>81.99</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>7.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salahaddin</td>
<td>7.44</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>33.09</td>
<td>10.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wassit</td>
<td>80.74</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>8.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karbala</td>
<td>76.08</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>11.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babil</td>
<td>76.16</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>8.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>56.55</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>21.10</td>
<td>13.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anbar</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>73.75</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diyala</td>
<td>22.37</td>
<td>12.39</td>
<td>37.53</td>
<td>10.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirkuk</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>53.40</td>
<td>5.92</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninewa</td>
<td>7.60</td>
<td>19.42</td>
<td>36.71</td>
<td>10.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulaymaniya</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>87.18</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erbil</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>94.69</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dohuk</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>90.31</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq: Unverified Election Results www.ieciraq.org/English/ Frameset_English.htm. N/A indicates that the party did not win enough percentage of the vote in that province to gain a seat in the Parliament.

Once again, some observers were optimistic. They said that the Sunni turn out, and the lack of violence on Election Day was a “turning point” in the Iraqi political process. Some aspects of the results were positive. The Sunni turnout in certain provinces increased compared with the January elections earlier in the year. For example, in the Anbar province 86 percent of voters turned out, an increase from 2 percent in the January elections of that year. The Sunni provinces of Ninawa and Salahaddin saw voter turnout at levels of 70 and 98 percent.
respectively in December. This was an increase from 17 and 29 percent in January, respectively. Nationally, voter turnout increased from 58 percent in the January elections, to 77 percent in December.\textsuperscript{104}

Yet, Sunnis did not have to choose between political participation and aiding the insurgency. Many Sunnis voted more to assert Sunni power than because of any support for the Iraqi political process. Some Sunni insurgents hedged their bets by continuing to carry out attacks while engaging in political talks with the Iraqi government. In fact, one counterinsurgency expert at the Pentagon suggested that a number of Sunni’s had adopted a model similar to the IRA’s dual-track strategy of continuing violence while using the Sinn Fein to pursue political solutions.\textsuperscript{105}

US officers also provided a more mixed assessment of the situation. Departing commander of US forces in Baghdad, Maj. Gen. William G. Webster Jr. assessed the situation in the capital at the end of 2005 that mixed a list of successes with present and future challenges.

- The insurgency has weakened since the election, and while overall attacks increased in 2005, successful attacks decreased 10 percent. Military operations cut the number of car bombs in Baghdad in half, and have uncovered double the amount of weapons caches.
- Insurgents were resorting to drive-by shootings, mortar and rocket attacks that were less accurate and therefore less successful.
- A need to focus Coalition efforts on training Iraqi forces to operate according to the rule of law and with respect to human rights, in addition to promoting a more even ethnic and sectarian balance in the forces.
- The US planned to increase the number of American advisors, then 10, working with each Iraqi police battalion in order to “plan, train, coach…and conduct operations with them.”
- The US planned to replace the 3\textsuperscript{rd} Infantry Division in Baghdad with a smaller force led by the 4\textsuperscript{th} Infantry Division. As areas of Baghdad are ceded to Iraqi security forces, the US Division would reduce its presence in the city.\textsuperscript{106}

US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Peter Pace was asked whether elections would sap the insurgency shortly in January 2006. He stated, “The opportunity in the future for folks who are against the government to hide, to store weapons and the like will go down. So I do believe that over the course of the coming year, that violence will subside.”\textsuperscript{107} Pace stressed, however, that the general Iraqi population would have to play a significant role. With regard to how long the insurgency could maintain its past level of violence, Pace stated:\textsuperscript{108}

I think that depends on the Iraqi people. I think it depends on how comfortable these terrorists feel moving about the towns and cities in Iraq. I think if the Iraqi people demonstrate to the terrorists that they’re not welcome in their cities, that they are not welcome in their towns, that murderers—which they are—murderers of fellow Muslims, indiscriminate murderers that they are—are not welcome, that will reduce the number of [insurgents].

Pace also stated that the possibility of US troop withdrawals in early 2006 would depend on the decisions of US commanders on the ground.

The GAO summarized the status of the insurgency in 2005 as follows.\textsuperscript{109}

- The insurgency intensified through October 2005 and has remained strong since then. As we reported in March 2005, the insurgency in Iraq—particularly the Sunni insurgency—grew in complexity, intensity, and lethality from June 2003 through early 2005.
- According to a February 2006 testimony by the Director of National Intelligence, insurgents are using...
increasingly lethal improvised explosive devices and continue to adapt to coalition countermeasures—enemy-initiated attacks against the coalition, its Iraqi partners, and infrastructure increased in number over time. The highest peak occurred during October 2005, around the time of Ramadan and the October referendum on Iraq’s constitution. This followed earlier peaks in August and November 2004 and January 2005. According to a senior US military officer, attack levels ebb and flow as the various insurgent groups—almost all of which are an intrinsic part of Iraq’s population—rearm and attack again.

As the administration has reported, insurgents share the goal of expelling the coalition from Iraq and destabilizing the Iraqi government to pursue their individual and, at times, conflicting goals. Iraqi Sunnis make up the largest portion of the insurgency and present the most significant threat to stability in Iraq. In February 2006, the Director of National Intelligence reported that the Iraqi Sunnis’ disaffection is likely to remain high in 2006, even if a broad, inclusive national government emerges. These insurgents continue to demonstrate the ability to recruit, supply, and attack coalition and Iraqi security forces. Their leaders continue to exploit Islamic themes, nationalism, and personal grievances to fuel opposition to the government and recruit more fighters.

According to the Director, the most extreme Sunni jihadists, such as al-Qa’ida in Iraq, will remain unreconciled and continue to attack Iraqi and coalition forces. The remainder of the insurgency consists of radical Shia groups, some of whom are supported by Iran, violent extremists, criminals, and, to a lesser degree, foreign fighters. According to the Director of National Intelligence, Iran provides guidance and training to select Iraqi Shia political groups and weapons and training to Shia militant groups to enable anti-coalition attacks. Iran also has contributed to the increasing lethality of anti-coalition attacks by enabling Shia militants to build improvised explosive devices with explosively formed projectiles, similar to those developed by Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah.

**Post-Election: Prelude to Increased Violence**

In practice, it soon became all too apparent that the elections had not limited insurgent activity and violence, and sectarian violence continued to increase. Insurgent attacks continued in the form of suicide bombings against mainly Shi’ite Arabs, political assassinations and “body dumps.” Car bombs and gunfire attacks also target Iraqi police forces. Revelations and accusations of “revenge killings” perpetrated by the Shi’ite dominated Interior Ministry forces against the Sunni population exacerbated sectarian and ethnic tensions throughout talks to form a new government. Some attacks during this time period included:

- **December 16, 2005:** Gunmen killed two relatives of a senior Kurdish official in Mosul. The men, Dhiab Hamad al-Hamdani and his son were relatives of PUK party official Khodr Hassan al-Hamdani.

- **December 18, 2005:** Police discovered the body of former Iraqi Army officer Abbas Abdullah Fadhl and an unidentified man in Baghdad. In eastern Baghdad, a suicide bomber killed a police officer and injured two others.

- **December 19, 2005:** Ziyad Ali al-Zawba’i, the Deputy Governor of Baghdad, and three of his bodyguards escape an assassination attempt in the western Baghdad district of Al-Amil. A car bomb in the Al-Iskan district of Baghdad killed two Iraqi civilians and wounded eight others, including five policemen. The brother of Sa’d Nayif al-Hardan, minister of state for governorate affairs, was kidnapped in Al-Khalidiyah City in western Iraq. A car bomb exploded outside a children’s hospital in Baghdad, killing at least two people and wounding 11.

- **December 22, 2005:** Gunmen killed six Iraqi policemen in Baghdad. In Samarra, gunmen killed three Iraqi policemen and wounded four others. Gunmen assassinated Sheik Saffah Nayif al-Fayyad, a tribal leader of the Al Bu-Amir tribe, north of Baghdad. In Balad Ruz, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives outside a mosque, killing 10 Shi’ites.

- **December 23, 2005:** In Balad, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives outside a mosque, killing four people.
December 26, 2005: In Diyala province, gunmen abducted Sunni police colonel and killed a member of the local city council. Also in Diyala, a car bomb, part of a failed assassination attempt against the governor, killed a bodyguard.

December 28, 2005: 14 people from a single Shi’ite family were found shot dead in their home in Mamudiyah. In Baghdad, a former Ba’ath police office was gunned down in a separate incident.

December 29, 2005: Gunmen attacked a minibus carrying Shi’ites in Latifiyah, south of Baghdad, killing 14.

December 31, 2005: Gunmen near Tikrit kidnapped three people, including a policeman. Iraqi security forces discover the remains of five bodies south of the capital; four were found in a river and one, half-tortured, was found in an orchard. A bomb targeting the local headquarters of the Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party in Khalis killed five people.

January 1, 2006: In Kirkuk and other northern cities, a wave of bombings killed at least 40 people. In Baghdad, gunmen killed two worshippers and wounded five as they left the Sunni Hodhaifa mosque. In Mahmudiyah, Sunni Arab insurgents shot and killed a Shi’ite cleric, a member of Moqtada al-Sadr’s movement.

January 2, 2006: seven police recruits were killed from a roadside bomb outside Baquba, 13 others were wounded. In Rustimiyah, south of Baghdad, Iraqi security forces discovered eight unidentified bodies in a water purification plant.

January 3, 2006: Insurgents attempted to assassinate Ahmed al-Bakka, the head of the Shi’ite Dawa party in Muqdadiya. Instead, they killed his nephew and a bodyguard. In the Baghdad neighborhood of Kadhimiya, militants attacked an Iraqi police patrol with a car bomb, killing five and wounding 15 officers and civilians. In the al-Dora neighborhood, a car bomb detonated near an Iraqi police commando patrol, killing three, including a commando, and wounding 11. Insurgents blew up 20 fuel tankers traveling in a convoy from Baji to Baghdad. The attacks occurred in Tikrit and Mashada.

January 4, 2006: A suicide bomber attacked a funeral procession in Muqdadiya, killing 50 people and wounding 40 more. Militants kidnap the sister of Interior Minister Bayan Jabr, demanding that the ministry release all female prisoners. In the Baghdad neighborhood of Amariya, insurgents ambush and kill a prominent oil ministry official.

January 5, 2006: In Ramadi, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives near a police recruitment center where approximately 1,000 Iraqis were waiting to apply for new police jobs. 68 were killed and an unknown number wounded. 45 Iraqis were killed in Karbala in a separate blast. In Baquba, four policemen died and four were wounded in an insurgent ambush.

January 9, 2006: Two suicide bombers detonated their explosives outside of the Ministry of the Interior, killing seven people and wounding 35 more. The 84th anniversary of the formation of the Iraqi police was being celebrated in the building next door. Each bomber had the appropriate security badge, though Iraqi guards were able to identify the first bomber as a threat. Their gunfire set off his explosives.

Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jafaari denounced this new violence as an attempt to undermine efforts to construct a governing coalition. Other senior officials, like President Talibani also called for unity and an inclusive government. Despite such calls for continued cooperation, some individual members of both the Sunni and Shi’ite coalition parties made public statements that threatened efforts at creating an inclusive government. SCIRI issued a warning to Sunni elements of the insurgency that its “patience is wearing thin” and hinted that it may use militias such as the Badr Brigade to carry out revenge attacks against suspected insurgents.

In Sadr City, over 5,000 Shi’ite Muslims protested in the streets on January 7 to condemn the suicide attacks and moderate Sunni leaders, while voicing support for the Ministry of the
Interior. Izzat al-Shahbandar, an official with the Iraqi Accordance Front, the main Sunni coalition party involved in the negotiation process, remarked that the current Shi’ite-dominated government was acting as an “accomplice” in the ongoing violence by pursuing sectarian policies and strengthening Shi’ite controlled militias.

There were also continued reports of Shi’ite militiamen and MOI forces carrying out violence against Sunnis. For example, in the Sunni neighborhood of Tobji, armed men in Interior Ministry police uniforms killed three Sunni’s and abducted more than 20 others. One of the few released, Yasser Khalil, told his story to an AP reporter:

“They took us away and put us into a room in a building I didn’t recognize, where they beat us and asked us questions about who we were. They then took a few of us in their cars and dumped us on the eastern outskirts of Baghdad, saying if we said anything or looked at them they would kill us.”

Sunni religious and political leaders condemned these, and similar attacks. Sunnis speculated over whether the attackers were agents of the Interior Ministry, or gunmen wearing ministry police uniforms, a tactic that had been used by insurgents in other instances. Sunni cleric Ahmed Abdul Gharfour al-Samarraei highlighted in a speech what he saw as a dilemma for Sunnis in the face of both a hostile Shi’ite dominated Interior Ministry police and U.S.-led coalition forces attempting to wage a counterinsurgency campaign: “Should an Iraqi man surrender? If he surrenders, he will be detained and tortured. If he resists, he will be considered a terrorist.”

The Attack on the Askariya Shrine and the Increase of Low-Level Civil Conflict

On February 22, insurgents brought sectarian violence to a new and dramatic height. They attacked the 1,200-year-old Askariya shrine in Samarra, a Shi’ite holy landmark, destroying its golden dome but causing no deaths. The destruction of the shrine, which housed the graves of two revered Shi’ite imams, caused an unprecedented wave of sectarian violence in Iraq. In its Human Rights Report, the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq stated that since the bombing, “there has been a marked deterioration in the security environment, resulting in hundreds of cases of killings, torture, illegal detention and displacement.”

It went on to characterize the violence that ensued in subsequent days.

Numerous killings reportedly took place, including public executions by militias, in Al-Baldiat, Sadr City and Al-Sha’ab areas of Baghdad. Street clashes and assaults by armed groups continued for days. Many individuals were reportedly detained at improvised checkpoints, or were abducted from homes and mosques. Several of those illegally detained were later found dead, often bearing signs of severe torture…

In retaliation for the Samarra bombing, a significant number of Sunni mosques were reportedly attacked, destroyed or damaged and clerics were among those assassinated. Such attacks did not seem to have been spontaneous but rather revealed a degree of organization and the face that the perpetrators had readily access to resources and equipment…

…members of all communities were negatively affected by the unleashed violence and tit-for-tat attacks.”

Officials in Iraq reported that security forces had arrested as many as 10 individuals suspected of being involved in the bombing in the days following the attack. According to initial investigations of the damage, it appeared that the mausoleum’s four main pillars were packed

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with explosives. These explosive charges were then connected together and linked to a
detonator, triggered from a distance. Jassem Mohammed Jaafar, Iraq’s Construction Minister,
stated that this was a sophisticated operation and rigging the explosives would have taken at least
12 hours. Later studies showed that some 20 men had occupied the mosque at night and spent
hours systematically planting some 400 pounds worth of explosives.

Almost immediately, observers differed sharply over just how serious a step the attack was in
pushing the country towards civil war. US State Department Spokesman Adam Ereli asserted
that the violence, and Iraqi’s reaction to it, was an “affirmation” of a successful US policy in
Iraq. “You’ve got political leadership acting together on behalf of the common good, and you’ve
got security forces demonstrating that capability and a responsibility as a national entity that
we’ve been working to develop and that has now been put to the test and, I think, is proving
successful,” Ereli said. Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch echoed these sentiments saying, “We’re not
seeing civil war ignited in Iraq…We’re seeing a competent, capable Iraqi government using their
security forces to calm the storm.” On the Sunday morning talk show “Face the Nation,”
National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley said that Iraqi’s had “stared into the abyss a bit, and I
think they’ve all concluded that further violence…is not in their interest.”

These views contrasted sharply with the view of Tariq al-Hashimi, the leader of the Sunni
dominated Iraqi Accordance Front who called the reaction of the governments security forces
“miserable and ashamed” and said that “as usual [they were] either audience or participant.” Other reports similarly noted that ISF were either unable, or unwilling to stop attacks by
militias.

US officials indicated on Saturday that Coalition troops had more than quadrupled its patrols
from 65 on Wednesday to 268. Whether this was because Iraqi forces were unable to handle
the increased violence, or whether it was intended simply as a reassurance or force multiplier to
aid Iraqi troops was unclear.

Other officials in the US were less optimistic, or simply more realistic. Brig. Gen. Mark
Kimmitt said that the violence was a pothole rather than a bump in the road and that the US and
Iraq will “find out if the shock absorbers in the Iraqi society will hold or whether this will crack
the frame.” Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice took a similar approach and played down the
hot button issue of civil war saying, “I don’t think we do the Iraqi people any good, or really that
we are fair to them, in continually raising the specter that they might fall into civil war.”

Some Iraqis portrayed the violence in a similar light. Hassan al-Bazzaz, a political science
professor at Baghdad University said, “We are on the brink of either solving our problems or
falling into a hole from which it would be very difficult to climb out.” He added, “This might be
a turning point for all of us. If not, everyone will pay a very high price…there will be no
exceptions.” However, almost one month after the attack, Iraq’s former prime minister Iyad
Allawi told BBC news that, “It is unfortunate that we are in a civil war.”

There were similar differences over responsibility for the attack. US officials, and the majority of
their Iraqi counterparts, indicated that the blame was probably the result of actions by a Neo-
Salafi extremist group like al-Qa’ida. In an interview on CNN, Iraq’s National Security Advisor,
Mowaffak al-Rubaie stated that the attack was the “blueprint” of al-Qa’ida.

However, no group immediately claimed the attack, and speculation varied depending on who
was asked. One Iraqi man blamed the al-Sadr’s Mahdi Militia for the attack. In fact, some
Shi’ites condemned that attack, while also assigning blame to their own sect. Mahmoud al-Mashhadany, an official with the Sunni political party the Iraqi Consensus Front, also accused the Shi’ites of planning the attack and the retaliatory violence that followed saying, “We think what happened yesterday was organized. It had all been organized the night before.”

The mujaheddin shura, a council of Islamic extremist insurgent groups in Iraq, including al-Qa’ida, issued a statement blaming the attack on the Iraqi government’s cooperation and close relationship with Iran. The group also indicated that it was preparing a “shocking” response to the “conspiracy.”

Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad blamed the attack on the US and Israel saying during a TV broadcast, “These heinous acts are committed by a group of Zionists and occupiers that have failed.”

Regardless of who was responsible, the response pushed the country towards large-scale civil war. Hundreds of Iraqis were killed in the violence that followed the attack on the Mosque, and Shi’ites responded with more violence against Sunnis. Frequent targets during this period were mosques, schools, headquarters of political parties and hospitals along with Shi’ite or Sunni dominated neighborhoods and large public places in general. While US soldiers were killed and many attacks were aimed at Iraqi police and military forces, the violence was largely perpetrated against Iraqi civilians and appeared to be sectarian in nature.

This cycle, which continued into March, included a mix of past methods of attack used to cause mass casualties against civilians and Iraqi security forces such as car bombs and suicide bombers, but also an increase in low-level civil conflict including mystery killings, body dumps, and assassinations carried out both by Sunnis and Shi’ites. But the low-level nature of many of the attacks made it difficult to impossible to determine with certainty the perpetrators of much of the violence or why the victims were chosen.

Although it is difficult to accurately assess the level of violence triggered by the attack on the mosque, the numerous confirmed attacks that did occur during the first five days following the attack show just how serious its impact was:

- February 22, 2006: In Al Amin, southeast of Baghdad, gunmen set fire to a house believed to be the residence of Sunni militants.
- February 22, 2006: Gunmen identified as Mahdi fighters drove into Al Shabab and attacked Ibad Al Rahman, a Sunni mosque, kidnapped a man inside, and set the mosque on fire.
- February 22, 2006: 7 US soldiers were killed by roadside bombs.
- February 23, 2006: An attack on a Sunni mosque in Baquba killed 8 Iraqi soldiers and wounded nearly a dozen people.
- February 23, 2006: 47 people, both Sunnis and Shi’ites were forced from their vehicles by gunmen and shot, their bodies dumped in a ditch near Baqubah. Many were on their way to protest the shrine bombing. Included in these bodies were three Iraqi journalists.
- February 23, 2006: In Basra, militiamen broke into a prison, hauled out 12 inmates (including 2 Egyptians, 2 Tunisians, a Libyan, a Saudi and a Turk) and shot them.
- February 23, 2006: The Sunni clerical Association of Muslim Scholars said 168 Sunni mosques were attacked, 10 imams killed and 15 abducted.
• February 23, 2006: Gunmen opened fire on a Sunni mosque in Baquba, where police were guarding access to the mosque.

• February 23, 2006: At a Shi’ite demonstration in Kirkuk, police found and defused a dozen explosive devices.

• February 24, 2006: Three Sunni mosques in southern Baghdad were attacked and mortar rounds landed near the Shi’ite shrine of Salman al-Farisi in the town of Salman Pak, 20 miles south of the capital.

• February 24, 2006: Gunmen stormed a house south of Baghdad and shot dead five Shi’ite men.

• February 24, 2006: Two more rockets exploded in the British Embassy compound in Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone, causing minor injuries to two British workers.

• February 24, 2006: Police found at least 27 bodies in Baghdad and other cities and towns.

• February 24, 2006: In Samarra, a roadside bomb killed two policemen.

• February 25, 2006: Three police commandos died when the funeral of a prominent Iraqi television journalist killed in the violence was ambushed in western Baghdad.

• February 25, 2006: Gun battles erupted around a Sunni mosque in southwestern Baghdad after Interior Ministry forces dispatched to protect the mosque came under fire from gunmen inside.

• February 25, 2006: The bodies of 14 slain police commandos were found near their three burned vehicles near a Sunni mosque in southwestern Baghdad, and 11 other bodies were discovered in various locations across Baghdad.

• February 25, 2006: A car bomb killed four people in the Shi’ite holy city of Karbala

• February 25, 2006: 13 members of a Shi’ite family were massacred in the town of Baquba.

• February 25, 2006: Two rockets slammed into Baghdad's Shi’ite slum, Sadr City, killing three people, including a child, and wounding seven.

• February 25, 2006: 21 other people died in small-scale shootings and bombings in Baghdad and western areas of the city.

• February 26, 2006: At least seven mortar rounds hit in a Shi’ite enclave of Dora a predominantly Sunni Arab district and one of the most dangerous parts of the city police said. Fifteen people were reported killed at 45 injured.

• February 26, 2006: Two more mortar rounds crashed into homes in the city's the eastern Shi’ite-dominated neighborhood of Hurriyah, killing three civilians and injuring six others.

• February 26, 2006: A group of soccer players stumbled upon three bodies in Mahmoudiya, south of Baghdad. The victims had been cuffed, blindfolded and shot in the head and chest.

• February 26, 2006: In Madain, southeast of the capital, a roadside bomb exploded near a police patrol, killing one officer and injuring two others.

• February 26, 2006: in Ramadi, gunmen shot dead an ex-general in Saddam Hussein’s army as he drove his car through the Sunni-insurgent stronghold.

• February 26, 2006: In Hillah, a Shi’ite-dominated city in Babil, a bomb exploded at a crowded bus station, injuring five people.

• February 26, 2006: A bomb exploded in a Shi’ite mosque in Basra, causing minor injuries.

• February 26, 2006: US soldiers were killed when a roadside bomb struck their vehicle in western Baghdad.
• February 28, 2006: A pair of bomb attacks in the poor, mostly Shi’ite, Jadida district left 27 dead and 112 injured. In the first incident, a man wearing an explosives belt targeted a gas station. Five minutes later, the first of at least five car bombs in the capital exploded near a group of laborers. A car bomb struck near a small Shi’ite mosque in the Hurriya district of central Baghdad, killing 25 and injuring 43. Another detonated by remote control near a small market in the mostly Shi’ite Karada district left six dead and 18 injured. In the upscale Sunni Arab district of Zayona, a car bomb targeting an army patrol killed five, while a car bomb targeting a convoy for an advisor to the Defense Ministry, Daham Radhi Assal, and injured three. Elsewhere, a car bomb targeting a police patrol on the road between Kirkuk and the capital killed four civilians.

• February 28, 2006: In the Hurriya district, gunmen blew up a Sunni mosque without causing casualties.

• February 28, 2006: Attacking damaged a mosque in Tikrit that houses the remains of Hussein’s father.

• February 28, 2006: A mortar shell landed near the offices of Baghdad TV, a satellite channel operated by the Iraqi Islamic Party, a Sunni faction. Two employees were injured.

• February 28, 2006: Authorities in Baquba discovered nine bodies, each shot in the head.

• February 28, 2006: Two British soldiers were killed and another injured when their Land Rover was blown up by a roadside bomb while on patrol in the Iraqi town of Amara.

Similar types of attacks continued into March. On March 1, two car bombs killed 26 civilians and wounded 55. The following day a bomb in a vegetable market in Baghdad killed eight and wounded 14. On March 3 over 50 Sunni insurgents attacked a small town near Baghdad killing 25 mostly Shi’ite workers. The following day, two mosques were attacked, one Sunni and one Shi’ite. On March 5 two car bombings and various shootings throughout the day killed 25 Iraqis. 36 bodies were discovered on March 8: 18 in the back of a van and 18 that washed up at a water treatment plant. On March 12 a series of explosions killed over 50 people and wounded 200 throughout a Shi’ite slum near Baghdad. On the morning of March 15 authorities and newspapers reported that over 87 bodies had been discovered in the past 24 hours. Baghdad, a mixed city, became particularly violent. In the month after the Askariya attack, the murder rate in the city tripled from 11 per day to 33 per day. During this same time period, US military officials indicated that 1, 313 Iraqi civilians had been killed, and 173 of those deaths were the result of car bombs. In the period from March 7 until March 21, over 191 bodies were found, many of them blindfolded, mutilated and shot in the head.

One affect the general deterioration of security had in the wake of the bombing was to cause average Iraqi’s to turn to small arms for their own protection. With this increase in demand came an increase in price. The price of a Russian-made AK-47 increased from $112 before the Askariya attack, to $290 afterward. The price of hand grenades has almost doubled to $95.

In April, continuing sectarian violence brought together religious leaders from both Sunni and Shi’ite sects to try and halt the bloodshed and prevent Iraq from descending into civil war. Held under the auspices of the Arab League, the conference was to take place in Amman. Organizers of the conference, strongly backed by King Abdullah, said that the meeting would generate a declaration against sectarian violence signed by both Shi’ite and Sunni leaders.

Mosque bombings by Sunni insurgents continued in April. On April 6, a car bomb exploded near the sacred Imam Ali shrine in Najaf killing 10 and injuring 30. The very next day, three suicide bombers targeted the Baratha mosque in Baghdad, a primary headquarters for SCIRI, killing over 80 and wounding more than 140. At least two of the bombers were dressed as women to hide the bombs and slipped into the mosque as the worshippers left. The first bomb detonated at
the main exit, and the second inside the mosque as people rushed back in for safety. Ten seconds later, the third bomb exploded.139

Although Shi’ite leaders called for calm, the attacks underscored the continuity of violence in Iraq, put greater pressure on political leaders to form a coalition government, and increased pressure on al-Jaafari to step down in favor of a less divisive leader.

In May, in its report to Congress, the Department of Defense gave an official perspective on the violence of that day and the increased sectarian violence that followed:140

“The February 22 bombing of the Golden Mosque of Samarra produced an upsurge in sectarian and militia violence but did not produce the civil war hoped for by its perpetrators. Iraqi government and religious leaders were united in condemning the attacks and in restraining sectarian unrest. The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) also played a key role, operating effectively and with restraint. The performance of the ISF was critical to halting the spread of violence, keeping the perpetrators of the bombing from achieving their broader strategic goal. Although polls indicated that a majority of Iraqis were concerned that sectarian violence could spread to become civil war, the same polls indicated that perceptions of neighborhood safety remained relatively unchanged. This view reflects data that indicate that more than 80% of terrorist attacks were concentrated in just 4 of Iraq’s 18 provinces. Twelve provinces, containing more than 50% of the population, experienced only 6% of all attacks.”

The distribution of total attacks by province, shortly before, and in the months after the mosque bombing is shown below in Figure II.6. It is worth noting however that this data only includes insurgency incidents as defined MNF-I. It does not seem to include many, if not most, low-level cases of sectarian and ethnic violence and does not include incidents where crime may be a cause. Therefore it is possible that many of the day-to-day incidents that took place in the aftermath of February 22 are not reflected in the graph.

**Figure II.7: Total Attacks By Province: February 11, 2006 – May 12, 2006**


Note: Actual numbers were estimates derived from data presented in the above report.

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This count is useful largely as a way of looking at deliberate acts of violence that can clearly be attributed to Sunni insurgents. It has little value in looking at the overall patterns of violence and civil conflict in Iraq. Even so, it does show that most major Sunni attacks had significant territorial limits. The first four provinces – Baghdad, Anbar, Salah ad Din and Diyala – accounted for 81% of all attacks during this period. Baghdad, the “epicenter” of this violence absorbed 32% of all attacks. Twelve provinces, which held 50% of the Iraqi population, experienced 6% of all attacks and ten provinces suffered one or fewer incidents per day according to the report to Congress.  

The report specifically noted the up tick in sectarian violence targeted at civilians following the mosque bombing. The percentage of attacks aimed at Iraqi civilians rose from 9% in January, to 10% in February and 13% in March. In mixed cities, the percentages were often greater. For example in Baghdad 12% targeted civilians in February and 18% in March. Still, it must be remembered that this only includes “attacks” as defined by MNF-I, and does not include incidents of violence categorized as “crime” or those that are not reported to MNF-I.  

Sectarian Cleansing and Internal Displacement

The long-term impact of this spate of sectarian violence on Iraq’s future is still unclear, and only uncertain estimates exist of its scale and location. In some mixed Shi’ite-Sunni communities it had a unifying effect. In these instances Shi’ites and Sunnis organized armed patrols to protect their neighborhoods from sectarian violence.

At the same time however, it seemed that sectarian displacement became steadily more serious since mid-2005, as Sunni and Shi’ite families left their mixed neighborhoods for areas where their sect was the majority. The U.N-affiliated International Organization for Migration estimated that by the end of March as many as 25,000 Iraqi’s had been displaced since the Askariya bombing.  

The Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration put the number even higher at 32,000. Although numbers differ, it is estimated that of these families, between 220 and 761 were Shi’ites that had fled from the Sunni dominated al-Anbar province to Baghdad. In turn, 50 Sunni families had reportedly relocated to from Baghdad to Fallujah. It is also believed that 1,250 Shi’ite families fled Baghdad and central Iraq and settled in Najaf. In Fallujah, another city that is predominately Sunni, only 37 Shi’ite families remained according to the organization. By mid-April, the Ministry of Displacement Migration put the number at 60,000 people. A spokesman for the ministry estimated that every day roughly 1,000 Iraqi’s were being forced to flee their homes. Much of this displacement occurred in and around the capital, traditionally a mixed city.

Between March 22 and April 15, some sources report that the number of displaced Iraqis tripled from 23,000 to almost 70,000 people. By April 19, the total number of Iraqis displaced from sectarian violence was estimated to be 80,000 by the President of the Iraqi Red Crescent Society, Said Hakki. This included over 7,000 Shi’ite families and about 2,800 Sunni families. This total steadily climbed and by mid-May, Iraqi immigration officials said that between 90,000 and 100,000 individuals had been displaced, or 15,000 families.  

In the Shi’ite city of Najaf, an abandoned hotel was turned into a shelter for incoming families and in Nasiriyyah, arriving families began setting up tents on the outskirts of the city. Similarly, an amusement park in the predominately Shi’ite town of al-Kut was converted into a makeshift
refugee camp. Iraqi officials worried that this massive relocation would cause food and water shortages. In April, there were reports that with dysentery spreading, conditions were expected to worsen with the coming summer.

Mr. Hakki said that camps had been established in 14 provinces, with the majority of refugees flooding to those in Samarra, Fallujah, Basra, Najaf and neighborhoods within Baghdad. The Red Crescent, the prime minister’s office, and the ministries of Health, Migration and Displacement, Interior and Defense were working to alleviate health concerns associated with the displacement and provide clean water, latrines, food and bedding.

In addition to the fear of disease, Mr. Hakki also worried that these secularly segregated refugee camps would become easy targets for terrorists seeking mass casualty attacks.

Spokesman for MNF-I, Lt. Col. Barry Johnson said that US officials were aware of the problem and were working to address it with the Iraqi government. “The key issue,” Lt. Col. Johnson continued, “is to continue to develop the Iraqi security forces and peoples’ confidence in their ability.”

This internal displacement, while often the result of direct threats by either Sunni insurgents or Shi’ite militias, was also due to the general deterioration of security and increase in sectarian tensions following the attack on the shrine. Families, who often felt secure among their long-time neighbors of the opposite sect, were now facing abductions and killings perpetrated in broad daylight by masked gunmen. For example, when carloads of gunmen grabbed Mohannad al-Azawi, a Sunni, from his pet store in Baghdad and a Shi’ite friend attempted to intervene, witnesses said the men pointed a pistol to his head and asked, “You want us to blow your brains out too?”

The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq detailed these occurrences in a report issued in April noting that “a number of Sunni and Shi’a families living in mixed neighborhoods were forcibly evicted from their homes or left voluntarily because of threats of violence from militias, insurgents and other armed groups.”

It was far from clear how methodical these targeted secular evictions were. Because they were perpetrated by a combination of gangs, insurgents and militias, and targeted both Sunnis and Shi’ites, it seemed unlikely that a concerted effort by a single or even a few organizations was at work. However, Mr. Hakki noted that in most cases, the threats were coming from groups based outside of the neighborhoods. “They are highly organized,” he said, “It is not happening in a haphazard way.” However, the story told by one auto-parts storeowner is Baghdad was perhaps more illustrative of the way Iraqis view the violence. Once a month gunmen came to his business to collect $300 in “protection money.” “They say they’re with the insurgency and that they’re protecting me from worse things. Who knows the truth…I just pay. We all pay.”

According to a memo attributed to al-Qa’ida in May 2006, it appeared that the displacement of Shi’ites was a new element of the terrorist organization’s strategy in Iraq. The memo, found in an al-Qa’ida “hide out” in Yousifiya by US forces, calls on followers to “displace the Shi’ites and displace their shops and businesses from our areas.”

The stories told by individual Iraqis were often similar. One individual, Bassam Fariq Daash, a 34-year old Shi’ite fled from his predominately Sunni village of Awad to nearby Shoula after numerous death threats from insurgents. Reportedly, he was one of 147 Shi’ite families that had come to that town since the February 22 attack. In a similar instance, a Sunni man who lived
in Samarra was beaten by black-clad militia men, his mother was shot and he was told by the
gunmen that they would kill him and “everybody [he knows]” if he did not leave the city
immediately.164 Hussein Alawan, a Shi’ite, was driven out of the mixed city of Latifiyah: “They
told me that I should leave within 24 hours or we will all get killed. So we left everything there
and took only the bare things we need to live.”165

A Sunni family, the Ubaidis, had just finished lunch in their mixed neighborhood of Shaab, in
Baghdad, when masked gunmen knocked at their door and demanded to speak with Ziad, 21 and
his father, Tariq. Both were shoved into the trunk of a car, their bodies discovered four days later
dumped in a town near Baghdad. Muazzaz, Tariq’s wife, who had lived in the neighborhood for
19 years said, “In a while, this area will be 100% Shi’ite…It’s definitely sectarian cleansing.”166

Mahadiyia Mushin, a Shi’ite residing in the suburb of Abu Ghaib, found her name on a death
list together with the names of 31 other Shi’ite families that was distributed by Sunni
Mujahideen. As she was preparing to leave, she watched gunmen drag her neighbor from his
house, torture and shoot him, and then light his house on fire as a warning to those who refused
to comply.167

According to one Sunni man, Abu Omar, members of the Mahdi Army burst into his home one
night searching for his son. When they could not find him, they left but not before telling the
man that they would kill his son when they found him. Although the man and his son had
committed no offense, the Mahdi members said that they were killing all young men named
Omar and Bakar, popular Sunni names. When Abu Omar called the police the next day for
protection, they told him that because of his proximity to Sadr City, “there’s nothing they could
do for a Sunni” in that area. He and other Sunni families subsequently fled the neighborhood to
the Sunni-dominated area west of the Tigris.168

In the mixed al-Amel district, some Sunni families received envelopes containing a single bullet
and a letter telling them to leave the neighborhood immediately.169 A Sunni shop owner, Dhafir
Sadoun, left his long time residence in Sadr City saying “We did not fear the Mahdi Army
because we’ve lived in Sadr City for 20 years, and everyone knows us and knows how we love
the Shi’ites. But the Interior Ministry commandos arrest any Sunni. They don’t just arrest them;
they kill them.”170 The displacement caused by this sectarian violence was also being exploited
for financial gain in some instances. There were reports that an estate agent in Adamiyah, a
Sunni suburb in Baghdad, had paid teenagers to distribute fliers to Shi’ite households warning
them to leave with the intention of buying up the property at low prices.171

Similar tactics were often employed in other areas. Leaflets were frequently distributed by
gunmen or even by children. In some instances, those who had fled did so after hearing their
names on a list of “enemies” read out at a Sunni mosque. It was also reported that “religious
vigilantes” would paint black crosses, referred to as “the mark of death,” on the doors of those it
sought to drive out. Young children were sometimes abducted for several hours and then
returned to their families with a warning that if they did not leave, next time their children would
be killed.172

This displacement already began to affect local governance in the spring of 2006. In Musayyib, a
traditionally mixed district, the city council was run by 17 Shi’ites, most of who were al-Sadr
supporters, and included two non-voting Sunni members. There were also reports that members
of the Mahdi Army had slowly begun policing the neighborhoods, implementing strict
punishments for the violation of Islamic law in the area. In one instance a women was doused in acid for having her ankles exposed.\textsuperscript{173}

Displacement also drove Iraqis outside Iraq’s borders as the number of Iraqi refugees to surrounding countries increased. In 2004, 258 Iraqis registered as refugees with the UNHCR in Egypt. Between 2005 and March 2006, that number increased to 828. Although Iraqi embassies in Egypt, Syria and Jordan confirmed that there had been an increase in Iraqi refugees to those countries, they did not have exact numbers. In addition, although the UNHCR numbers are not in and of themselves alarming, they nearly doubled in a little over a year. It is safe to say as well that most Iraqi refugees do not bother registering with the UN.\textsuperscript{174}

Some worried that the constant level of violence, its damaging effects on reconstruction and the rehabilitation of the economy would force out many of Iraq’s “best and brightest,” making the recovery from this cycle all the more difficult. For example, Ban Istafan, a women biologist and teacher, fled with her Christian family to Amman after receiving a threatening letter.

In June, the United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants published a study that indicated 644,500 Iraqis had fled to Syria and Jordan since the beginning of the war and that 889,000 had fled Iraq in general. From July 2004 to the end of 2005, the Iraqi government issued two million passports. The group estimated that in total, about 2.5% of Iraq’s population had moved abroad.\textsuperscript{175}

\textbf{US-Iraqi Campaigns in Early 2006}

The Coalition launched several operations in March 2006 aimed at insurgents attempting to foster sectarian violence. Many of these were conducted with Iraqi’s taking the lead were possible.

In “Operation Scales of Justice,” 26,000 Iraqi army and police together with 10,000 Coalition forces conducted 300 patrols no the streets of Baghdad per day in an effort to increase general security. This operation included more than 100 checkpoints established throughout the city and was scheduled to continue until a new Iraqi government was formed.\textsuperscript{176} According to Maj. Gen. James Thurman, this operation has resulted in increased local trust in Iraqi forces and over 3,000 anonymous tips regarding insurgent activity. He also indicated that these ongoing operations had caused a 58% reduction in attacks in the city in the past 90 days.\textsuperscript{177}

“Operation Northern Lights” was an Iraqi-led operation that consisted of a series of offensive raids to capture or kill insurgents, seize weapons and explosive material and halt sectarian attacks. In the initial stages of the operation, 18 insurgents were captured and 8 weapons caches were discovered.\textsuperscript{178}

On March 17, the US launched “Operation Swarmer” near Samarra. This joint U.S.-Iraqi operation, led by the 101\textsuperscript{st} airborne division, was described as the largest air assault since the 2003 invasion. According to US military officials, 1,500 Coalition and Iraqi troops participated and more than 50 aircraft and 200 tactical vehicles were used.\textsuperscript{179} Four battalions were used from the 101\textsuperscript{st} airborne were used and about 60 percent of the troops involved were Iraqi according to Lt. Col. Edward Loomis.\textsuperscript{180}
The operation focused on a 10 square mile area northeast of the city that had been a concentration of sectarian attacks in the weeks prior and also reportedly harbored al-Qa’ida insurgents. At least 40 suspected insurgents were apprehended on the first day and several weapons caches were discovered that contained artillery shells, explosives, roadside bomb making materials and military uniforms. There were no reports of casualties or resistance by insurgents.

The second day of the assault only netted 10 more detainees and 17 from the day prior were released. In addition, no new weapons caches were found. American command even began to send some troops back to their bases.

By the third day of the operation, Lt. Col. Loomis stated that about 80 suspected insurgents had been detained since Thursday, the first day of the assault. Six of those individuals were allegedly involved in the killing of an Iraqi television station director and his driver several days earlier.

The operation concluded March 22 with no casualties and resulted in the detention of 104 suspected insurgents and the discovery of 24 weapons caches.

On the evening of March 26, US and Iraqi forces conducted a joint operation to disrupt a terrorist cell in northeast Baghdad. The events that followed however were sharply disputed by US and Iraqi officials.

According to military spokesman for the U.S., the raid resulted in 16 insurgents killed, 15 captured, one hostage freed and the discovery of weapons and bomb-making equipment. While some reports indicated that the operation was aimed at Shi’ite militiamen loyal to al-Sadr who were using the center for interrogation and torture, others stated that it was against a Sunni-led element.

Iraqi officials however told a very different account. According to them, US and Iraqi forces descended on the mosque surrounding it with armed humvees and sealed off all exits. When soldiers attempted to enter the mosque, they took fire resulting in an hour-long gun battle. The Interior Ministry said that 17 people were killed, including the mosque’s 80-year-old imam. Those that were killed supposedly worked for al-Sadr and were engaged in evening prayer at the mosque when the raid began.

Muhammad Ridha, who worked at the complex, said, “There was no resistance at all from the mosque. There were no weapons during prayers…the purpose of the raid was to kill Shi’ites.”

Aides to al-Sadr alleged that 25 people were killed and that US troops shot the guards outside the mosques before storming the facility and killing all those inside. One witness, a policeman, said that the mosque appeared to have been hit by a rocket.

US officials continued to deny that they had entered a mosque. In fact, Lt. Gen. Peter Chiarelli said that it was an Iraqi led operation backed up by 25 US advisors. He added that the Iraqi units “told us point blank that this was not a mosque” and that “there’s been huge misinformation” on the part of those who had suggested otherwise.

Yet footage aired on Iraqi news channels showed at least a dozen unarmed corpses, including one elderly man, in what appeared to be a prayer room. In a Pentagon briefing, Gen. Peter Pace stated that there was a minaret and prayer room inside the compound but could not verify whether people were killed in the prayer room.
US Army photos showed dead men with weapons in a room that lacked prayer rugs. It was possible that militia members staged the scene after US and Iraqi forces departed. In the past, insurgents have demonstrated a capability to manipulate public opinion by forcing Coalition forces to attack holy sites, or make it appear that they did, as part of informational warfare.

The issue may simply be one of definition. The “mosque” was marked on the outside by a sign that read “Al-Moustafa Husayniyah.” “Husayniyah” is a Shi’ite term for a religious center or a community center that may also house offices for political purposes. Thus, although the complex did not have many of the traditional characteristics of a “mosque,” it was considered to be on by the Shi’ites nonetheless.

Regardless of whether the facility was a mosque, a prayer room, or neither, the operation had damaging political effects. The governor of Baghdad subsequently broke off all cooperation with US military forces. Prime Minister al-Jaafari secured a promise from Gen. George Casey that he would conduct an investigation into the allegations. Shi’ite political leaders condemned the raid and al-Sadr used the event as another opportunity to condemn the American presence in Iraq and call for Shi’ite solidarity. One Mahdi member guarding a roadblock to Sadr City said that, “We are ready to resist the Americans and strike their bases…The Sunnis have nothing to do with this, and we shouldn’t accuse them of everything that’s going on.”

“Operation Cobra Strike” was another joint US-Iraqi operation launched in April. Its goal was to locate the suspected leader and financier of a terrorist cell working in the area. The cell was suspected of several murders, kidnappings and roadside bombings in Haswah and Iskandariyah. Although this same Iraqi-US team had been conducting joint operations since December 2005, this was the first mission orchestrated solely by Iraqi soldiers.

The results of these military operations against insurgent “strongholds” are mixed at best. Even as Iraqi forces came on line and began taking the lead in joint operations, many of the same limits remained. While there have been success stories, insurgents are consistently able to disperse and re-emerge at another location. Lack of a permanent security presence in many areas can permit the insurgents and criminals to return. Perhaps most importantly, despite the fact that these operations and raids are often operational successes—they are able to net insurgent groups and weapons caches—the number of attacks has not abated and it is increasingly the case that Iraqis are the targets.

In any case, it was not at all clear in the early months of 2006 that the Sunni insurgency was the primary threat to Iraqi unity and security. US and Iraqi officials cited the sectarian violence and the risk of civil war as increasing areas of concern. US military officials in particular noted the danger that Shi’ite militias posed to Iraqi security.

Nonetheless, there were talks within the Department of Defense in April 2006 to orchestrate a “second liberation of Baghdad,” once a new Iraqi government was formed. Operationally, it was designed to have Iraqi forces in the lead supported by US air power, special operations, intelligence, and back-up troops. As Iraqi and US forces went through each neighborhood, they would leave behind “Sweat” teams (Sewage, Water, Electricity and Trash) to improve local conditions and facilities. This new battle was to offer the citizens of the capital protection from sectarian violence in exchange for their assistance in identifying and capturing or killing insurgent and terrorist groups.
Symbolically, it was to be an effort to show that the Iraqi government was capable of “taking back the streets.” The goal was to conduct the operation during the summer, once the government had settled in and then begin withdrawing US troops toward the end of the year.

At this same time, Iraqi leaders debated putting all of Iraq’s police and interior security forces in the capital under a “unified command,” rather than have them divided between various ministries. This goal of this re-arrangement was to curb sectarian divisions within the forces, diminish the presence of Coalition forces on the streets, and to instill confidence in Iraq’s citizens and send a message that the Iraqi government was capable of bringing security to Baghdad. The logic behind such a move was summed up by Vice President Adel Abdul Mahdi, “No one knows who is who right now – we have tens of thousands of forces. We need a unified force to secure Baghdad: same uniform, same patrol car, one commander.”

Many still remained skeptical of the plan, emphasizing that simply restructuring the forces by putting them all together would do little to solve the internal sectarian divides or diminish the presence of militias and death squads within the forces. For some U.S advisors and diplomats in Iraq, a “big-bang” solution seemed unlikely to solve the problems plaguing Iraq’s security forces. These same officials assessed that it was not so much about the structure or command of the forces, but Iraqi political will to confront the issue and implement what will be difficult and controversial solutions.

The Impact of Problems in Creating a National Unity Government

Progress also continued in forming a government. In late January the two dominant Shi’ite and Sunni political blocs, United Iraqi Alliance and the Iraqi Accordance Front had entered into talks and publicly announced a list of potential nominees for Prime Minister in the next government. These included current Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari; Adil Abdul-Mahdi of SCIRI; nuclear physicist Husseing al-Shahrastani; and Fadhila party representative Nadim al-Jabiri. In February, Ibrahim al-Jaafari was re-elected to the position by one vote over Adil Abdul-Mahdi. Al-Jaafari’s victory was in part due to the support he received from the legislators associated with al-Sadr.

The post-election violence did, however, complicate many aspects of the effort to create an inclusive government. For example, the control of the Defense Ministry and Interior Ministry posts at the cabinet level became an even more contentious issue between the Shi’ite dominated United Iraqi Alliance and the mostly Sunni Iraqi Accordance Front. Adnan al-Dulaimi, the leader of the Iraqi Accordance Front, stated that he believed the appointment to the positions should be “kept away from any sectarian and political considerations” and accused the MOI forces of engaging in “sectarian cleansing” in Baghdad. Hadi al-Amri, the head of the Badr Brigade, the militia associated with SCIRI, responded that faced with “daily slaughter” the Shi’ites “will not relinquish security portfolios.”

In March however, the ministers of both the Defense and Interior Ministries attempted to stem abuses by announcing that they would only carry out joint raids in the future.

As for the Sunni insurgency, the Iraqi government continued to hold direct talks with willing Sunni militant groups. Although the government had emphasized that no steadfast commitments have been made between parties, Talabani’s advisor for security affairs, Wafiq al Samarie, said that, “many groups are communicating with us.” This ongoing dialogue began in the months
leading up to the December election in an effort to draw Sunni Arabs, the core of the insurgency, into the political process and isolate the Neo-Salafi elements.

The bombing of the Askariya shrine and the sectarian violence that followed threatened the progress in forming an inclusive government. However, Iraqi political figures called on the country to recognize that the attack was an attempt to create a civil war and urged Iraqi’s to be calm.

President Jalal Talabani said the day of the attacks, “We are facing a major conspiracy that is targeting Iraq’s unity…we should all stand hand in hand to prevent the danger of a civil war.” President Bush echoed these sentiments saying, “The terrorists in Iraq have again proven that they are enemies of all faiths and of all humanity…the world must stand united against them, and steadfast behind the people of Iraq.” The President also pledged US assistance to rebuild the damaged shrine. Unlike the “activist” al-Sadr, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani told his followers that attacks on Sunni mosques were forbidden.

President Bush spoke with the leaders of the seven major political factions by phone and urged them to reinstitute talks. Afterwards, Sunni leaders agreed to meet with their Shi’ite and Kurdish counterparts. Later that evening, Prime Minister al-Jaafari, accompanied by the leaders of the other major coalitions, announced at a press conference that that country would not allow itself to engage in civil war and that this was a moment of “terrific political symbolism.”

US Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, warned that future US support of the Iraqi government and aid would be dependent upon the success of the government’s efforts at creating an inclusive arrangement. Al-Jaafari responded that the new government will not be sectarian, “Not because the US ambassador says this and warns us, but because this is our policy.”

A leading Sunni coalition party suspended talks to form a coalition government and issued a list of demands that had to be met in order for negotiations to continue. These demands, which were met shortly, included the imposition of a curfew, a denunciation of violence by the Iraqi government, and a return of the Sunni mosques occupied by Shi’ite militias.

The first meeting of Iraq’s 275-member Council or Representatives took place on March 16 amid ongoing sectarian violence. The meeting itself was largely ceremonial, and lasted just over 30 minutes. According to Iraq’s constitution, the country then had 60 days to form a government, yet many issues critical to the formation of a unity government had yet to be resolved between the various political factions.

One of the most contentious decisions by the dominant Shi’ite bloc was the nomination of al-Jaafari as Prime Minister. Sunnis, Kurds and some secular members called for a new nomination by the United Iraqi Alliance. Perhaps more debilitating to the functionality of the body is that it could not elect its own officials or take up new business until it reached an agreement on the makeup of its new leadership.

Al-Jaafari stated after the meeting that he would step down as Prime Minister “if the people ask me [to].” It seemed likely however that the UIA would attempt stay united behind al-Jaafari.

In fact, some characterized the ceremony as more of an interruption to the ongoing negotiations between the various political groups to create a coalition government that is satisfactory to Iraq’s majority Shi’ites, yet gives proportional roles to the Sunnis and Kurds as well.
One of the initiatives aimed to achieve this end, was the formation of a 19-member national security council to set policies pertaining to the army and police forces, the counter-insurgency campaign and the disarmament and dissolution of Shi’ite militias. Two of the positions in the council would go to the President and Prime Minister with the remaining seats being distributed to parties in proportion to their representation in parliament. This council’s relationship with the cabinet, chosen by the Prime Minister, was unclear because nowhere in the constitution does it provide for the formation of such a council. In fact, Kurdish leaders first suggested the council in January as a check on Shi’ite power. Although the UIA initially resisted it as unconstitutional, pressure from the other political parties and Ambassador Khalilzad caused it to reluctantly acquiesce. Still, it did so only on the grounds that decisions will require the approval by 13 members, which for the foreseeable future gives the Shi’ites “veto” power as long as they remain unified within the council.

US frustration with al-Jaafari’s reluctance to rein in Shi’ite militias became increasingly vocal and in return, so did Shi’ite accusations of political bullying on the part of the US. This tension was worsened by allegations that US and Iraqi military forces raided a mosque, killing worshippers loyal to al-Sadr. In late March, Ambassador Khalilzad stated that President Bush “doesn’t want, doesn’t support, doesn’t accept” al-Jaafari as the next prime minister. Although US officials in Baghdad did not elaborate on the statement, they did not dispute its authenticity.

Representatives from al-Jaafari’s office immediately condemned the remark. “How can they do this?” Hadier al-Ubady, a spokesman for al-Jaafari asked. “An ambassador telling a sovereign country what to do is unacceptable.”

The divisions within the United Iraqi Alliance over al-Jaafari, and increasing US pressure to form a government, began to cause members of the Shi’ite coalition to withdraw their support from the prime minister. In April, a senior Shi’ite politician, Kassim Daoud, called for al-Jaafari to step down. One day later, Sheik Jalaladeen al-Sagheir, a deputy to the SCIRI’s leader Abul-Aziz al-Hakim, declared that he was officially suggesting another candidate to replace al-Jaafari. Even Iraqi Vice President Adel Abdul Mehdi, considered by some to be his primary inter-party rival for the position, publicly called for al-Jaafari to quit. Grand Ayatollah Sistani however urged the Shi’ite political parties to form a government quickly but also to support al-Jaafari and maintain their unity.

During the same time, Kurdish leaders officially informed the UIA that they had decided to reject al-Jaafari as their nomination for prime minister.

A surprise visit by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Foreign Secretary Jack Straw designed to impress upon Iraqi politicians the urgency of forming an inclusive government may have had the effect of further hardening al-Jaafari’s insistence that he remain in office. Their visit came at a time when the US had become increasingly vocal in its preference for another prime minister. This, and the fact that both Rice and Straw seemed to have a more amicable meeting with Adel Abdul Mehdi, likely caused al-Jaafari to view their visit as an indirect attempt to influence Iraqi leaders and unseat him from his position.

In fact, al-Jaafari’s top advisor, Haider al-Abadi, reflected these exact sentiments saying, “pressure from outside is not helping to speed up any solution…all its doing is hardening the position of people who are supporting Jaafari.” Specifically addressing the US-British diplomatic
envoy he said, “They shouldn’t have come to Baghdad.” Al-Jaafari himself said, “There is a decision that was reached by a democratic mechanism, and I stand with it.”

Given an increasing US displeasure with al-Jaafari’s role as Prime Minister and his inability to reign in Shi’ite militias, some postulated that the US might have a new ally in Iraq’s Sunnis. During Rice’s visit she dined with several Sunni political leaders in Baghdad, some who had boycotted the January 2005 elections and formerly supported the insurgency. Tariq al-Hashimi, the secretary general of the Sunni-dominated Iraqi Islamic Party recounted his time with Secretary Rice: “I looked Condi in the eye and told her, ‘Your ambassador shows tremendous courage and is doing a hell of a good job in Iraq’.” During her brief trip, Rice praised the maturation of the Sunni political body and their participation in Iraq’s democratic process.

It is unclear how enduring these trends in U.S.-Suni relations will be. In addition, the US likely still understands that as the majority sect, it will have to deal with the Shi’ites in any representative government.

The UIA attempted to break the deadlock on April 10 by sending a three-member delegation to persuade Sunni and Kurdish political groups to support al-Jaafari’s nomination. These efforts failed and the groups continued to press for another candidate, saying they would not join a new government under al-Jaafari’s leadership.

Two days later, Adnan Pachachi, the acting parliament speaker and a Sunni, announced that he would convene the legislature the following week to continue with the democratic process and force the parties to decide on a prime minister. Pachachi added that he was told by Shi’ite politicians that they hoped to resolve the issue before the parliament meets.

Fearing that this meeting could create open divisions within the Shi’ite alliance, thereby dissolving its power as the most dominant bloc, the UIA countered that the names of those nominated for the top posts in government must be agreed upon beforehand. Shi’ite political leaders justified this move by asserting that convening a parliamentary session would be of little use if individuals were not already selected to hold positions within a government.

This tactic of insisting on approval of the nominations to important government posts before a legislative meeting could shift the burden of agreement back to Sunnis and Kurds. Shi’ite politicians requested that representatives from each main political bloc meet that Sunday, the day prior to the parliamentary meeting, to discuss possible nominations.

That weekend both secular leaders from Iyad Allawi’s party as well as top Shi’ite clerics attempted to broker last minute agreements. Allawi announced on Iraqi television that politicians might have to create an “emergency government” in order to save Iraq from “its current deadly crises.”

Adnan Pachachi, the speaker of the parliament and a member of Allawi’s party who had previously announced his intentions to convene the body on Monday regardless of whether disputes could be settled beforehand, proposed that this emergency government include parties that didn’t win seats in the election and be based on a new arrangement rather than the constitution. Pachachi called this a “genuine, effective partnership” between political groups rather than election results “which we do not think reflected the voters’ will, anyway.”

Whether this was a genuine attempt to form a coalition government or not, if implemented, it would have given a disproportionate voice to secular parties such as Allawi’s who, although
favored by the U.S., did not receive significant votes compared to secular and ethnic based parties in December.\textsuperscript{239}

Worried that a resolution to the current impasse could divide the UIA, top Sh’ite clerics met in Najaf to discuss potential solutions that would allow the bloc to hold onto power and debated more forceful intervention by the clergy. The week prior, the son of Grand Ayatollah Sistani, Mohammed Ridha Sistani, received a guarantee from al-Sadr that he would not object if the UIA replaced al-Jaafari with another candidate.\textsuperscript{240}

Nonetheless, when Monday arrived the meeting of the parliament was postponed as Sh’ite politicians still worked to put together a list of nominations to the top positions including prime minister. An advisor to al-Jaafari indicated that one of the leading candidates to replace the Prime Minister was Ali al-Adeeb, who was also from the al-Dawa party. The aide, Adnan Ali al-Kadhimi, also said that Talabani would wear like remain as President and that Iyad Allawi, Adnan al-Dulaimi and Saleh al-Mutlak were being considered for the two deputy president positions. Talabani is a Kurd, Allawi a secular Shi’ite and al-Dulaimi and al-Mutlak both Sunnis. The Iraqi ambassador to the U.S., Samir Sumaidaie, also mentioned al-Adeeb’s as a potential candidate on a CNN Sunday talk show.\textsuperscript{241}

Despite the fact that these names were being considered by all parties, many leaders, seemingly disillusioned with the process, predicted the negotiations to form a government would go on for weeks or months. Al-Mutlak, who acknowledged he was running for deputy president, said that he believed negotiations would wear on for weeks. He called al-Adeeb, the possible candidate for Prime Minister “an Iranian,” and said that regardless of what candidates the UIA puts forward, “all of them are the same.”\textsuperscript{242} Similarly, Zafir al-Ani, a spokesman for the Iraqi Accordance Front, predicted that a government would not be formed for another month because of the differences between the parties.\textsuperscript{243}

Al-Jaafari sent mixed messages as to whether he would voluntarily step down or allow himself to be replaced by consensus. On April 19, he announced in a nationally televised news conference that stepping down would be “out of the question.”\textsuperscript{244} In a complete reversal, the very next day he signaled that he would allow leaders of the UIA to withdraw his nomination. Shi’ite legislators planned to meet that Saturday to conclude whether al-Jaafari would remain, or a new candidate would be nominated in his place. Bassem Sharif, a UIA lawmaker indicated that the party was leaning toward the latter saying, “The majority opinion is in favor of this [changing the nomination].” Although the legislature would still convene on Thursday, parliament members indicated that it would be brief, and that a formal session would be put off until Sunday after Shi’ite leaders had settled the future of al-Jaafari.\textsuperscript{245}

The election of Nouri Maliki as the next Prime Minister broke the major, but hardly the only, impasse in forming a new government. The US and others hoped that because he was not as closely associated with al-Sadr as al-Jaafari was, that he would have a freer hand in reigning in the militias, creating an ethnically and sectarian balanced military and police forces with a national spirit.

In late April, Maliki pledged that his government would begin the process of funneling the militias into Iraq’s security forces. This was reinforced by a statement by the usually reticent Grand Ayatollah Sistani in which he declared, “Weapons must be in the hands of government security forces that should not be tied to political parties but to the nation.”\textsuperscript{246} He added further,
that Iraqi Security Forces must be formed “on sound, patriotic bases so that their allegiance shall be to the homeland alone, not to any other political or other groups.”

In Maliki’s first meeting with al-Sadr as the Iraq’s new Prime Minister, he broached the issue of disbanding the militias gently saying, “Merging the militias into the military is not to disrespect them but to reward them for their role in the struggle against dictatorship.” He also said it was a “solution to the problem of having weapons outside the government.” Yet during a news conference after the meeting, the young cleric did not address the issue of disbanding the Mahdi Army, but rather focused his comments on the Rice-Rumsfeld visit to the region and the presence of US troops.

Early on in his tenure, Maliki also warned Iraq’s neighbors that while it was appreciative of their efforts to shelter anti-Saddam factions throughout the duration of his regime, Iraq would not tolerate “security interference,” or foreign involvement in “certain movements inside Iraq.”

At least behind the scenes, Maliki appeared to be making progress in forming a new Iraqi cabinet and government. In mid-May it was reported by Sheikh Khaled al-Attieh, the Shi’ite deputy speaker of the parliament, that the Defense Ministry would be given to a Sunni from Iyad Allawi’s secular list. He also stated that the Shi’ites would remain in control of the Interior Ministry, a contentious post as it controlled many of the internal security forces said to be infiltrated by Shi’ite militias and death squads. The Kurdish Alliance would head the ministries of foreign affairs, housing and construction, water and irrigation, industry and human rights. Al-Attieh also implied that the leader of the Oil Ministry was all but decided upon. Hussein Shahristani, a well-respected and impartial Shi’ite nuclear scientist would control the post.

During the ongoing political negotiations, sectarian violence did not relent and still threatened to precipitate civil war. Iraqi health and interior ministries statistics indicated that 686 civilians were killed in April in addition to 190 insurgents, 54 policemen and 22 Iraqi soldiers. For the same month, the Baghdad morgue reported that it had received 1,091 bodies. In reality, the death toll was probably higher.

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani acknowledged this in an emotional call for peace: “If we add to that the number of bodies which are not found, or similar crimes in other province, then the total number of calls for deep concern and rage.” He continued, “Behind every so-called unidentified body there is traumatized mother, an orphan child, a devastated father and an unfortunate wife. Each drop of blood spilt is watering the fields of evil and is growing the seeds of division.” He similarly called for unanimous and unequivocal condemnation of the acts by all of Iraq’s political parties and clerical leaders.

Despite promises by those close to Prime Minister Maliki that the government would be formed soon, delays continued, as did more assertions that an official announcement of the cabinet was at hand. As the constitutionally mandated deadline of Monday, May 22 approached, US and Iraqi officials reported that the cabinet would be announced ahead of the deadline. One Sunni politician, Dhafir al-Ani, said on May 18 that the decision would be made within 48 hours. Spokesmen for Maliki similarly asserted that process was almost complete and that of those who take up new positions in the cabinet, four would be women.
III. A New Iraqi Government Finally Appears: Summer 2006

The government came close to succeeding. On May 20, 2006, it announced most of the cabinet, although two key ministers had not been agreed upon. It had to make Maliki the acting Minister of the Interior and one of the new Deputy Prime Ministers, Salam al Zobaie, acting Minister of Defense. It had the following key members:

- **Prime Minister Nuri Al Maliki:** A graduate in Arabic letters and leading figure in Al Dawa. Maliki was Shi'ite Islamist, and graduate in Arabic letters, and had been an exile for many years and had been sentenced to death by Saddam's courts. He had been a strong advocate of hard-line "debaathification," but had been a key negotiator in dealing with the Kurds, where he had shown flexibility over issues like Kirkuk, and in offering compromises to the Sunnis and promises to abolish the militias and negotiate with the less extreme Sunni insurgents. He was not an experience leader or administrator, but had acquired a reputation for frankness, honesty, and a willingness to carry out meaningful negotiations.

- **Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih:** A former prime minister of the autonomous Kurdish area, closely tied to President Jalal Talabani and PUK Salih was given special responsibility for the economy and its reconstruction.

- **Deputy Prime Minister Salam al Zobaie:** A new figure from the main Sunni party, the Accordance Front, the main Sunni Arab grouping. His background was more tribal than religious. He was given special responsibility for oversight of the security forces.

- **Finance Minister Bayan Jabr:** Jabr was a senior leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), the strongest component of the Shi'ite alliance. He had previously been Minister of the Interior, but had come to be seen as tolerating police death squads and giving men from the Badr Organization, SCIRI's armed wing, positions in the police. As Minister of the Interior, he had overspent his budget.

- **Oil Minister Hussain al Shahristani:** Shahristani had a technical background, but as a physicist who had been jailed and tortured when he would not work on Saddam Hussein's nuclear weapons program. He had no petroleum background, and no practical background in managing large-scale industrial systems. His political experience was as ex-deputy parliamentary speaker.

- **Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari:** Zebari had already been foreign minister since 2003. He was a Kurd and former spokesman for the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) during the time of Saddam Hussein.

It was also clear that three other major figures continued to play the same major political role in shaping the conditions for developing Iraq politics without joining the government:

- **Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani:** Sistani remained the most senior and revered Shi'ite cleric. He retained vast political influence, and had played a major role in making the Shi'ite alliance compromise to choose Maliki, resisting pressures for sectarian conflict, and seeking compromises to keep Iraq unified, although he sometimes seemed to support federation.

- **Abdulaziz al-Hakim:** The leader of SCIRI and a key leader in the Shi'ite Alliance. Hakim had replaced his brother, the Ayatollah Mohammed Baqer al-Hakim, as leader when the latter was killed in a bombing in August 2003. Hakim had been a spokesman for national unity and negotiations with the Shi'ites, but was also closely associated with the Badr Organization. Some felt he had ties to Iran and militia attacks on Sunnis.

- **Moqtada al-Sadr:** Sadr remained the most activist Shi'ite religious leader, although he was still a relatively low ranking cleric. A charismatic preacher, he continued to call for Coalition withdrawal,
and advocate a strongly religious Iraqi state. His "Mahdi Army" had made a major recovery from its defeat in two failed revolts in 2004, and his supporter had been given some 30 votes in the new assembly to keep him in the Shi‘ite alliance. Several Sadr supporters had been made Ministers.

**Key Appointments: Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior, National Security Advisor**

In early June, al-Maliki announced the appointments to the ministries of defense, interior and national security, approved by the Iraqi legislature. The new Defense Minister was Iraqi Army Gen. Abdul-Qader Mohammed Jassim al-Mifarji, a Sunni; the Interior Minister was Jawad al-Bolani, a Shi‘ite; and the National Security Minister was Sherwan al-Waili, a Shi‘ite.258 Coming on the heels of the death of al-Zarqawi, the long delayed agreement by Iraq’s political factions on these contentious posts created at least a short-term optimism in Washington and Baghdad.

Al-Mifarji was not a member of any political party and when speaking to the parliament after his confirmation told of how he was removed from Saddam’s military and sentenced to seven years in prison after he opposed the invasion of Kuwait. “As a defense minister I will work for all Iraqis and will not work according to my tribal, religious and ethnic background,” al-Mifarji said.259

Al-Bolani, the Minister of the Interior, was born in Baghdad and had a career as an engineer in the Iraqi Air Force. He became involved in politics as a member of the United Iraqi Alliance in Nasiriyah in 2003 and then worked for the national government as the undersecretary for public works.260

The National Security Minister, al-Waili survived Saddam’s crackdown of the Shi‘ite uprising in the south that followed the Gulf War. He was head of the Basra City Council and a member of the Iraqi Governing Council. He belonged to the Iraqi Dawa Party (different from the Islamic Dawa Party) and graduated with a law degree from Basra University. He said that his first orders of business under the new post would be to tackle the issues of border and regional security.261

Even if the formation of a new cabinet adhered to the timeline laid out by the constitution, it was not clear that this would have any discernable affect on the level of sectarian violence that plagued Iraq. Even with ministerial posts agreed upon, numerous issues abounded – such as independent militias, Kurdish autonomy, and oil revenues – that could prove equally contentious. One secular politician, Ayad Jamal al-Din, warned that a new inclusive government would not be a panacea to the many problems facing Iraq. “I think that things will not calm down easily, even after the formation of a government, but in general there is progress in the political situation,” he said. Still, he feared that with the results of the elections that sectarianism had been enshrined in Iraq’s political landscape saying, “the democracy has become a democracy of sects.”262

**Al-Maliki’s Program**

Al- Maliki announced a 32-point program for Iraq’s future government on the day the new cabinet was announced. He repeated his call to end the role of the militias and announced the following program to unify the country:263

- Form a national unity government from all communities
- Abide by the constitution and any amendments
• Pursue national dialogue to build a free, pluralistic, united and democratic Iraq
• Renounce violence and crack down on terrorism
• Preserve Iraqi sovereignty and deal with the foreign forces on its soil within U.N. Security Council Resolution 1546
• Establish state institutions and the rule of law
• Prevent dictatorship, sectarianism and racism
• Encourage women to take an active role in society and state
• Give young people a healthy environment to develop in
• Protect and develop holy sites and encourage pilgrimage
• Observe the independence of science faculties
• Ensure the independence of the media
• Submit a comprehensive plan for construction and repairs
• Encourage reconstruction, with priority for deprived areas
• Accelerate renovation in the electricity industry
• Regulate the oil and gas industry, giving a role to regions
• Promote domestic investment and attract foreign capital
• Give priority attention to industry and agriculture
• Organize links between central and local government to enhance the federal structure of the state
• Build friendly relations with neighboring countries
• Enhance the role of regions and hold provincial elections
• Apply constitutional Article 140 to settle disputes over the status of Kirkuk, including holding a census and referendum
• Commit to tackling security issues
• Observe principles of balance and efficiency in governance
• Establish budgetary audits and address corruption
• Develop welfare systems against poverty and ignorance
• Develop higher education and scientific research
• Review the workings and promote independent panels like the Debaathification Commission and the anti-corruption board
• Review the electoral law and the Electoral Commission
• Control international borders and crossing points
• Put an end to people being forced to flee their homes
• Promote the acquisition of scientific qualifications
• Review detention cases and release the innocent immediately
Iraq began to acquire a new group of leaders nearly half a year after the election that gave them a mandate, but when the new government came to office it still faced a wartime environment, and one with a serious risk of civil war. Many leaders were still politically inexperienced and divided and most had to take over weak ministries with their own tensions and divisions with little or no previous experience in administering anything on the scale they now had to deal with.

The Ministries of Defense, Interior, Petroleum, and Finance all remained administrative nightmares requiring immediate leadership and organization. The Iraqi forces had to be given tighter control and more unity, and the new government faced major problems in terms of fiscal resources, cuts in the flow of foreign aid funding, and in securing and expanding oil exports.

The government also had to cope with appointing a new Constitutional advisory group, with a four-month deadline to clarify virtually every controversial issue in Iraqi politics and governance -- including a vague provision on abolishing militias. If this went well, and the new assembly approved the new revisions to the constitution, it faced a 60-day period in which to campaign for a popular referendum to vote on the result -- the fourth major shake up in the Iraqi government in two years.

This meant that the same new government that now had responsibility for shaping Iraqi forces and winning a war had to wait until December-March before it can actually begin to govern with a full constitutional mandate and legal base -- provided that it could holds the nation together, there was no division into federalism, and Iraqi society could rebuild some of the bridges across its recent sectarian and ethnic divisions.

It also faced the certainty that the insurgency would continue to strike at every fault line in the interim. It had to restore civil order and deal with the militias, make "year of the police" a reality that could create a truly national police.

In an op-ed that appeared in several major US newspapers later in the same week, al-Maliki attempted to lay out the three primary pillars of his strategy for Iraq. These included strengthening Iraq’s security forces and either absorbing or disbanding militias; rebuilding Iraq’s infrastructure; and begin to heal ethnic and sectarian strife unleashed since the end of Saddam through a campaign of “national reconciliation.”

**Working Toward National Reconciliation**

On June 25, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki presented a 24-point “National Reconciliation and Dialogue Project” to the Iraqi Council of Representatives, as part of his efforts to stem sectarian and ethnic violence in the country. The document—a product of rounds of debate within the Iraqi government, as well as talks involving Iraqi President Jalal al-Talabani, US ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad, and seven Sunni insurgent groups—aimed to draw insurgent elements of the armed opposition into the political process. On the day of its release, Mr. Maliki announced in Parliament “for he who wants to build, we offer a hand with an olive branch.”

Among its provisions the plan proposed limited amnesty to insurgents, offered a review of the de-Baathification process, and provided compensation to victims of attacks by terrorists or Iraqi and coalition forces. A number of points were included to win Sunni support, including the amnesty provision, a review of laws banning high-ranking members of the former ruling Ba’ath party from public posts, and a proposal to negotiate rules of engagement with American forces to prevent human rights violations during military operations.
Skirting the Issues

The document however, quickly drew criticism for its failure to address a number of key and divisive issues. Most notably, the document was ambiguous in specifying which insurgents would be granted amnesty, omitted mention of a timeline for the withdrawal of coalition forces from Iraq, and failed to lay out how the Iraqi government would deal with militias.

Article 5 broadly stated that prisoners who were not “involved in crimes, terrorist activities and war crimes against humanity” would be eligible for amnesty, given that they renounced violence and supported the national unity government. But it remained unclear whether insurgents, who killed Iraqi security forces or more contentiously, those who killed American troops, would be included in the amnesty plan. The original concept, indicated in earlier drafts of the document, was to provide a broad amnesty to detainees who were not involved in the “shedding of innocent Iraqis’ blood.”

The rewording of the amnesty provision in the final document reflected a compromise between competing interests in the national unity government, as well as pressure from Washington. During negotiations, religious Shi’ites opposed amnesty for Sunni insurgents, and while the US government supported efforts to co-opt insurgents into the political process, lawmakers were quick to lobby against amnesty for those who took part in the killing of American soldiers.

The national reconciliation plan was also criticized for glossing over the issue of coalition troop withdrawal. While it called for the strengthening of Iraqi security forces to take over the role of coalition troops, there was no mention of developing a concrete timetable for the withdrawal of foreign forces—a provision that was included in an earlier draft of the initiative, but subsequently omitted. The plan also included a lofty proposal to “solve the problem of militias,” without clearly detailing what this meant, and how it could be achieved.

More broadly, the complexity in developing the reconciliation plan revealed a struggle faced by the Iraqi government in trying to achieve two cross-cutting aims: coaxing insurgents into a participatory role in the political process, while simultaneously trying to project resolve in its crackdown on violent groups and establishing distance from armed factions. On the day al-Maliki launched the plan, he called on insurgents to “lay down their arms and join the democratic process,” but earlier stressed that “reconciliation and national dialogue does not mean honoring and reaching out to the killers and criminals.” 266 The severity of the challenge the Iraqi administration faced in balancing these two principles was exacerbated by the embedded affiliation of government groups with militias.

A couple of days after al-Maliki presented his National Reconciliation plan, he publicly announced that insurgents who attacked American forces would not be pardoned under the new amnesty. When asked to identify which groups and individuals would be eligible, he cited Iraqis who had carried out “sabotage” against the government, though only “minor” acts, as well as those who had joined the insurgency as an act of resistance against the American-led process, but had not killed anyone. He said it would also apply to members of the Baath Party of Saddam Hussein who renounced their allegiance.267

Reactions from the Sunni community to the National Reconciliation Plan were mixed. Some elder Sunni politicians, such as Adnan al-Dulaimi, as well as the Sunni Endowment, endorsed the plan, whereas the Mujaheddin al-Shura Council announced in an online statement that “there will be no reconciliation with the apostates, nor will our swords be put in their sheaths.”268
A member of the Islamic Army of Iraq said that violent attacks would continue so long as American troops were in Iraq. Adnan Thiyab al-Jubouri, a Sunni member of Parliament commented on the difficulty in bringing insurgents to the negotiating table: “We worked hard trying to make one of the resistance groups accept the reconciliation project but we failed. We’ve been in direct contact with most of them, except al-Qa’ida. They said it is impossible for the Iraqi armed resistance to stop. They insist that this is their right to get rid of the occupation.”

**Bringing Sunni Insurgents On-Board**

In spite of the controversy surrounding the reconciliation plan, there were some encouraging developments. When the initiative was introduced, several Sunni-led insurgent groups approached top Iraqi government officials to begin negotiations. And symbolically, the plan represented al-Maliki’s commitment to the new Constitution, and his political will and determination to embrace national unity, engage in negotiations with armed groups, and to offer amnesty.

Sunni cleric Ahmed Abdul Ghafour al-Samaraie offered the support of the Sunni Endowment, the government agency responsible for Sunni religious affairs. He called, however, on the government to move quickly to address gaps in the plan, including the disbanding of militias, and the release of all prisoners who have not been convicted. “We bless the initiative,” but al-Samaraie added, “We think that the first step to be taken regarding this plan is to disband armed militias because the government will not be able to impose the law on everybody with the presence of those militiamen that consider themselves above the law.”

Four days after the Prime Minister presented the initiative, 11 Sunni insurgent groups offered to immediately halt attacks on American-led forces in Iraq if Washington and the Iraqi government agreed to withdraw all coalition forces from the country within two years. Eight of the eleven insurgent groups that approached al-Maliki’s government came under the umbrella group of the 1920 Revolution Brigade. The Islamic Army in Iraq, the Mohammed Army and the Mujahedin Shura Council were not part of the offer to the government.

Although Prime Minister al-Maliki did not dismiss the proposal, in televised remarks, he said that the timetable demand was unrealistic since it was not certain whether Iraqi forces would be prepared within that timeframe to deem a foreign presence unnecessary. And while this particular arrangement never materialized, in the following weeks, 22 Arab Sunni groups had agreed to join al-Maliki’s initiative of national dialogue. In addition, a group of 18 senior officers of the former Ba’athist regime had met with President Jalal Talabani to discuss ways of integrating hundreds of Arab Sunni cashiered officers and non-commissioned officers into the Iraqi forces.

**Differences Unravel**

The first reconciliation meeting of the Supreme National Committee for Reconciliation and National Dialogue was held on July 22 and brought President Talabani, Prime Minister al-Maliki, top Shi’ite and Sunni officials, and other dignitaries together to discuss how to move forward with the national reconciliation plan. The committee included legislators, in addition to religious and tribal leaders.

As the meeting convened, debate quickly focused on the details of the amnesty provision—particularly the question of whether detainees who killed members of the American forces...
should be eligible for pardon. Some, including al-Maliki, argued, “all those whose hands were tainted with blood should be brought to justice,” defending his earlier stance on the issue.

The Sunni speaker of Parliament, Mahmoud al-Mashhadani contended, “If we punish a person who killed an American soldier, who is an occupier, we should punish the American soldiers who killed an Iraqi who fought against the occupation,” a perspective shared by many Sunnis. Al-Mashhadani continued, “In my point of view, the person who killed Americans in defense of his country, in other countries, they would build a statue for him.”

As officials and analysts assessed the prospects for Iraqi national reconciliation, some felt that some members of the Sunni community were warming to the idea of joining the political process, and showed increased propensity to abandon violence as a means of advancing political goals.

During a July 11 address at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad said that “a major change, a tectonic shift has taken place in the political orientation of the Sunni Arab community” as Sunnis are re-conceptualizing the new government and distancing themselves from the insurgency. “Sunni Arab leaders are realizing that nostalgia for their past dominance is not the basis for a realistic political strategy,” he said. Consequently they are more willing to engage in formal political procedures in the direction of national reconciliation.

At the same time, sectarian violence did not wane following the introduction of the national reconciliation initiative, but rather reached heightened levels in the ensuing months. And the surge in Shi’ite militia-related violence hurt efforts to draw Sunni insurgents into the political process. In early August, Gen. Casey said, “The people who are talking to us on the Sunni side have gone to the ground and don’t really want to talk to us right now.”

Perhaps partially due to the plan’s vagueness, or its lack of implementation guidelines, the initiative did not appear to carry the weight required to end the political deadlock perpetuated by sectarian and ethnic differences in Iraq. And the growing violence served as a firm reminder that, in spite of concessions made by the Shi’ite-led unity government, some Sunnis would not accept to lose power to the Shi’ite majority, or ideologically accept the US presence in Iraq.

**Growing Divides: Talk of Segregating the Country**

Violence carried out by Sunni and Shi’ite factions—which targeted civilians or drove them out of an area on the basis of their sect—appeared to be carving Baghdad into sectarian zones, protected by various armed groups. Increasingly, analysts were describing violence in the capital as part of a sectarian struggle for territorial gains to control Baghdad, and Iraq as a whole.

The Sunni strongholds in Baghdad include Ghazaliya and Ameriya in the west of the city, Karkh on the west bank of the river, and Adhamiya on the eastern bank of the river. To the east, lies the most prominent Shi’ite stronghold of Sadr City. Kadhemiya and Shuala to the northwest, are also predominantly Shi’ite areas. Among the flashpoint areas are the southern suburb of Dora, the Jihad district in the west, Sayediya and Ameriya in the southwest, and along the border between Shuala and Ghasazaliya.

In early August, Iraq’s Sunni Vice President Tareq al-Hashemi proposed a plan to form a National Guard unit, the first official Sunni militia, which would personally protect the legislator, as well as the Sunni stronghold Adhamiya, an area flanked by Shi’ite districts. The initial stages
of the plan reportedly aimed to recruit 350 former army personnel who were to be trained as part of the Defense ministry, and would be offered $700 per month.

The plan likely came as a response to an earlier announcement by Abdelaziz al-Hakim, head of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), that called for the creation of “public committees” to supervise neighborhoods.279

At the same time, some leaders of Iraq’s Shi’ite bloc openly began to promote a plan to partition the entire country along sectarian lines to curb violence. They advocated the creation of federal regions—similar to the Kurds’ enclave in the north—that would have independent defense forces, and autonomous control over oil resources in their territory.

Abdelaziz al-Hakim pushed a proposal that would create a nine-province district in the south, a largely peaceful area that holds 60 percent of the country’s oil reserves. Cabinet ministers, clerics, and ministers, promulgated the plan. 280

According to the Iraqi Constitution, any of Iraq’s 18 provinces, or a group of provinces, could hold a referendum on the formation of a “federal” region. But the Constitution left the definition of federalism vague, without specifying the conditions of such autonomy. The question of control over oil exploration was also skirted in the Constitution. According to the provision’s ambiguous wording, the federal government was allowed to administer “current” fields, provided that the revenues were divided in “a fair manner” among the regions.281 On August 7, Iraq’s Kurdish autonomous region published a draft version of a law that would grant itself the right to control petroleum operation in its own region, in addition to the province of Kirkuk. 282

Many Sunni leaders criticized the new push by the Shi’ite bloc to partition the country, arguing that these new calls were driven by Shi’ite ambitions to consolidate power, and to control oil reserves. Adnan Dulami, a leading Sunni Arab politician said, “controlling these areas will create a grand fortune that they can exploit. Their motive is that they are thirsty for control and power.”283

Most analysts agreed that the process of segregating Iraq into geographical regions would be a massive logistical and political undertaking, and would pose significant challenges. Since Iraq does not divide neatly along ethnic lines, any effort to segregate the country would involve large-scale relocations, and would likely lead to greater occurrences of “ethnic cleansing.”

A number of areas, including Baghdad, Diyala, northern Babil, and southern Salahuddin were truly mixed areas, comprised of a patchwork of Sunni and Shi’ite villages. Kirkuk, like Baghdad, was a deeply divided city. Other areas such as Basra and Mosul had significant minority populations. Determining how to divide and organize the security forces, and addressing oil fields, facilities, exploration, and revenue rights posed further complications to any proposal to divide the country.

Additionally, it was unclear how widespread public support was for such a proposal. A poll conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI) from June 14 to 24, 2006 indicated that the majority of Iraqis disagreed with calls for the segregation of their country along religions or ethnic lines.284 Sixty-eight percent of respondents strongly disagreed with the notion of portioning the country, 12 percent disagreed, 5 percent agreed, 8 percent strongly agreed, and 9 percent did not know or did not respond. The regional breakdown of the responses is depicted below in II.8. All regions, with the exception of the Kurdish areas, expressed reluctance to divide Iraq.
While the data lent support to the claim that Iraqis generally wanted the country to stay together, the results of the survey, like all polling data, had to be interpreted cautiously.

- First, the polling was conducted prior to the marked escalation in sectarian and ethnic violence in July. Iraqis may warm to the proposal of dividing Iraq if the threat of full-scale civil becomes more acute.

- Second, while Iraqis might broadly agree to the notion of a united country, they are likely to express sharp differences on a fundamental issue—how power should be distributed among the various factions in the country. A more robust analysis of the prospects for national unity would need to address underlying fault-lines concerning the balance of power.

The growing fragmentation in Iraq served as a pressing warning that the al-Maliki government had to act far more quickly and decisively, and that Iraq’s various factions did not have time to bargain by attrition to prevent the country from slipping into civil war, or dividing along sectarian lines. And the United States had to be prepared to rush in if it would help move political comprises forward—but the growing resilience to US efforts in Iraq was writing on the wall that the odds of success seemed to be deteriorating for months.
Map II.2: Sunni and Shia Strongholds in Baghdad

Source: “Carving up the Capital?” The Economist, July 29, 2006, 44.
Figure II.8: Separating Iraq Along Sectarian Lines – Regional Breakdown, June 2006

Some people are calling for the segregation of Iraqis according to religious or ethnic sect. Do you agree or disagree with this suggestion?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baghdad</th>
<th>Kurdish Area</th>
<th>Northern Arab</th>
<th>Sunni Areas</th>
<th>Mid-Euphrates</th>
<th>South</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>14%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
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<td>16%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Heightened Sectarian and Ethnic Violence

The month of July introduced a new wave of sectarian violence—largely characterized by tit-for-tat reprisals led by Sunni groups and Shi’ite militias, which increasingly appeared to be dictating the flux of violence in Iraq. In an address at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, US Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad warned that sectarian violence had overshadowed the threat posed by the Sunni insurgency as the main obstacle to achieving stability in Iraq. “A year ago, terrorism and the insurgency against the coalition and the Iraqi security forces were the principal sources of instability,” he said. "Violent sectarianism is now the main challenge...It is imperative for the new Iraqi government to make major progress in dealing with this challenge in the next six months.”

Since the spring of 2006, the primary threat to Iraqi security has generally evolved from “terrorism” to “insurgency,” to “ethnic and sectarian violence” that is pushing the country toward
civil war. In an expanded section on the security environment, the August 2006 Quarterly Report to Congress “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq,” addressed shifts in the nature of the insurgency.286

Rising sectarian strife defines the emerging nature of violence in mid-2006. Since the last report, the core conflict in Iraq changed into a struggle between Sunni and Shi’a extremists seeking to control key areas in Baghdad, create or protect sectarian enclaves, divert economic resources, and impose their own respective and religious agendas. Death squads and terrorists are locked in mutually reinforcing cycles of sectarian strife, with Sunni and Shi’a extremists each portraying themselves as the defenders of their respective sectarian groups. However, the Sunni Arab insurgency remains potent and viable, although its visibility has been overshadowed by the increase in sectarian violence.

**Stepped up Security Efforts in Baghdad**

The death of al-Zarqawi and the full creation of the new Iraqi government gave Iraqi and US officials an opportunity to seize on the momentum created by these new developments and move forward at the strategic and operational level. After President Bush convened a cabinet meeting at Camp David to discuss next steps in Iraq, he secretly flew into Baghdad on June 13, the first time he had been in the country since November 2003. Of his cabinet, only Vice President Cheney and Secretaries Rice and Rumsfeld knew of his departure. Al Maliki, who officially received Bush, did not know of his arrival until only moments before.287

During his meeting with al-Maliki and other Iraqi leaders, Bush stressed that the “the fate and the future of Iraq is in your hands.” However, Bush also reassured the Iraqi people, some wary of fading US support, “that when America gives a commitment, America will keep its commitment.”

Bush’s visit sparked protests back in Baghdad, where hundreds of supporters of al-Sadr demonstrated in the streets demanding the US to withdraw its force, chanting, “Iraq is for Iraqis,” and “No the occupation.” Some reports indicated that the number of protestors reached 2,000.289

The seldom-discussed effort to “re-take” Baghdad was implemented the day following Bush’s visit to Baghdad. Somewhere between 70,000 and 75,000 US forces and Iraqi Army and police units took to the streets of the capital in “Operation Forward Together,” twice the size of “Operation Lightning,” which took place in the city almost a year earlier.

The details of the operation, including its predicted duration, were unclear. Officials did say however that there would be a curfew in effect from 8:30 p.m. to 6 a.m. dusk until dawn everyday and on Fridays, cars would be prohibited from the streets for four hours in the afternoon, to schedule around prayer hours. Numerous patrols and checkpoints were planned as well. Additionally, citizens would not be allowed to carry guns on the street outside their homes.290 Security officials also indicated that if necessary, air strikes would be permitted.291

Maj. Gen. Abed Jassem, in the Ministry of Defense said that the operations would focus on “hot spots” in the capital, conducting targeted raids and searches in known insurgent areas. Gen. Jassem also added that two key goals of the stepped up security presence were to restore public confidence in Iraqi forces and to integrate the militias into the security forces. He added that a separate operation was being planned for the province of Diyala, where Zarqawi was killed days earlier, just outside of Baghdad.292
Gen. Al-Gharrawi, an officer the Ministry of the Interior, said that forces had obtained specific intelligence regarding al-Qa'ida locations in the city. During a press conference in the Rose Garden upon his return to Washington, President Bush gave similar indications saying, “new intelligence from those raids [after Zarqawi’s death] which will enable us to keep the pressure on the foreigners and local Iraqis who are killing innocent lives.”

According to newly confirmed Interior Minister Maj. Gen. Mahmoud Wailli, the actual number of troops in the city would remain the same. He emphasized that the operation went beyond the military realm and contained economic incentives for the Iraqi people such as gasoline incentives and proposed efforts for “beautifying” a war-torn city. Al-Maliki urged Iraqis to comply with the new security measures and to be patient. He reassured the people of Baghdad that ISF would not specifically target any one sect or ethnicity.

During the first day of the operation, Iraqi forces reported no resistance. “The people are feeling comfortable with the new security measures and they are waving to us. Until now, no classes have erupted and no bullets have been fired at us,” said Maj. Gen. Mahdi al-Gharrawi, the commander of public order forces under the MOI.

But progress from Operation Together Forward turned out to be slow and, as violence in the capital reached heightened levels in July, the plan was widely dismissed for failing to achieve its desired aims. Around two weeks after the security initiative was implemented, General William Caldwell announced that violence in Baghdad had decreased only slightly. “We do not see an upward trend,” he said. “We…see a slight decrease [in violence] but not of the degree we would like to see at this point.”

By the end of July, Caldwell acknowledged, “We have not witnessed the reduction in violence one would have hoped for...” In July, there were 558 violent incidents in Baghdad, up 10 percent from the four-month average. These attacks resulted in 2,100 deaths, 77 percent of which were attributed to sectarian violence.

That same week, General George Casey acknowledged that the increase in sectarian violence could require US forces to deploy more troops in Baghdad. During a news conference with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld on July 12, Casey attributed the spike in violence in July to Sunni terrorists affiliated with Al Qa’ida, and Shi’ite “death squads” engaging in indiscriminate attacks against civilians. Rumsfeld said that the number of Iraqi and American forces had increased to about 55,000 from 40,000 in attempt to curb the surge of violence in the capital.

The August 2006 DoD Quarterly Report to Congress, “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq,” acknowledged the failure of the security operation to curb high attack levels seen in May and June, citing that “the average of 23.7 attacks per day across Baghdad’s 10 districts was virtually unchanged from the 23.8 average daily attacks that occurred the month prior to the operation.” The report also noted “the rate of sectarian-style killings continued to rise, primarily in and around Baghdad.”

In Iraq, Prime Minister al-Maliki stressed that the national reconciliation plan was “the only and last way to save the security and political situation in the country.” “We all have this last chance to reconcile and work hard to avoid conflict and the blood,” he said during a July address to Parliament. “If it fails, God forbid, I don’t know what will be Iraq’s fate.”

In late July, Pentagon officials announced a security plan to increase the number of US and Iraqi troops stationed in the capital. General John P. Abizad, head of US Central Command said in a
July 21 interview, “The country can deal with the insurgency better than it can with the sectarian violence, and it needs to move decisively against the sectarian violence now.”

The security plan involved the addition of the Army’s 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team and four military police companies, boosting US troop levels in Baghdad by more than 4,000, to be matched by the addition of at least 4,000 Iraqi soldiers. The plan would temporarily increase the US presence in Iraq to above 130,000. The core security operation was planned to last three months, and would target militia-run death squads.

Major General Caldwell declared in late July, “whoever wins the Baghdad area, whoever is able to bring peace and security to that area, is going to set the conditions to stabilize this country.”

And in late August, US Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad asserted that the United States simply “[could] not achieve its goals of a democratic, stable and secure Iraq if the unacceptable levels of violence” in Baghdad persisted.

He outlined three principle components of the Baghdad Security Plan:

1. **Stabilizing Baghdad zone by zone.** Four Iraqi Army battalions, two Coalition brigades and five military police companies will be redeployed to Baghdad, resulting in more than 12,000 additional forces on the city's streets. The National Police will simultaneously undergo intensive retraining, with each brigade to be subjected to a three-day assessment period, with its leadership evaluated and, if necessary, replaced. Each brigade will subsequently receive additional training focused on countering violent sectarianism before redeployment.

2. **Disrupting support zones.** Even as Iraqi and Coalition forces concentrate on securing specific neighborhoods, they will continue to conduct targeted operations in other zones that are staging areas for the violence. This includes targeted raids and other operations on areas outside of Baghdad's center, where planning cells, car-bomb factories and terrorist safe houses are located. This will degrade the ability of the terrorists and death squads to mount offensive operations into the areas we are working to stabilize.

3. **Undertaking civic action and economic development.** After joint Coalition and Iraqi military operations have secured a neighborhood or district, a structure of Iraqi security forces sufficient to maintain the peace is expected to be left in place and reinforced with the capacity to undertake civic action and foster economic revitalization. This will be supported with $500 million in funds from Prime Minister Maliki's government and at least $130 million of US funds. In addition, a moral compact between the religious leaders of the two Islamic communities—which will ban sectarian killings—will delegitimize the violence. Such a compact would deny the killers a political or religious sanctuary while Iraqi and Coalition forces deny them physical shelter. For the longer term, the plan seeks to induce insurgents and militias to lay down their arms by implementing a program to demobilize unauthorized armed groups. It will also review the implementation of the de-Baathification process—referring those accused of crimes to the judiciary and reconciling with the rest.

Defense experts and political officials expressed diverging points of view on whether the second phase of Operation Together Forward would be successful in curbing sectarian violence. Supporters of the plan stressed that Baghdad was the “center of gravity,” and its security was paramount to stabilizing the country. Sending additional US troops to back Iraqi forces, would allow the Iraqi public to feel safer and more confident. Brig. Gen. Jaleel Khalaf, commander of Iraqi troops in western Baghdad said that the plan would bring much-needed experience and equipment to Iraqi forces in the capital.

At the same time, many Sunni Arab political and religious leaders were warming to the idea of increased US troop levels in the country, fearing that a security vacuum would lead to civil war. Increasingly, it appeared that Iraqis were looking to the US military to manage their
conflicts—a development likely fueled by sectarian tensions, and skepticism of the capabilities of Iraqi forces.

Some questioned, however, whether deploying more American troops in the capital would curb or provoke insurgency-related violence. The plan could have a backlash effect—fostering greater resentment toward the US presence in Iraq, and eroding Iraqis’ confidence in their own security forces. By invoking images of an American “occupation,” insurgents could capitalize on the stepped-up US security presence to depict America as the enemy. The plan could also be perceived seen as a step back in an effort to push Iraqi troops to the forefront.

Mahmoud Othman, A Kurdish lawmaker and member of the Supreme National Reconciliation Committee said, “The goal has always been to decrease the presence of US troops in the urban areas. Now they’re coming back.”312 And the failure of the first phase of Operation Together Forward to create stability in the capital fed uncertainty about a second attempt. Senator John McCain, Republican representative of Arizona, said the plan of sending more US troops was similar to playing a game of “whack-a-mole.”313

Violence in Baghdad, as well as in other parts of the country, was driven by a complicated assortment of political, economic, social, sectarian, and ethnic variables. And it was unclear whether a heavier US presence could do more than temporarily pause an escalation in violence.

The new security crackdown initially showed signs of curbing violence in the capital. At an August 28 press briefing in Baghdad, General William Caldwell cited “progress toward reducing the number of kidnappings, murders and sectarian violence” in areas where Iraqi and Coalition forces were operating. He said that the number of average killings in Baghdad dropped 46 percent from July to August, and that the number of insurgent attacks in the province declined to an average of 23 per day.314

In spite of these developments, there were strong reasons to remain cautiously optimistic. It would still be months before the long-term impact of the security crackdown could be accurately inferred, and a lull in violence was not necessarily a prelude to a more secure environment over the long run. But perhaps more significantly, although Zalmay Khalilzad described the latest operation as “the most concentrated, focused effort to date in the capital,”315 the approach remained susceptible to many of the same obstacles that hindered past efforts:

- A concentration of troops in Baghdad tended to push the action outside of the capital to other areas where Iraqi and US military capabilities were less prevalent.
- While a heavier troop presence could temporarily tone down the violence, insurgents would likely adapt to the emerging security environment, and resort to new tactics. Militia members could easily lay low, wait out the Iraqi government and coalition operations in Baghdad for several months, then regroup and operate at the margins, or shift to other areas.
- Without steady follow-up in terms of political settlement, government services, and rule of law, having troops “pacify” a city often had little lasting value. And such follow-up efforts would require significant levels of commitment, resources and time, from both United States and the Iraqi government.

Health Ministry officials reported a marked surge in violence at the end of August and early weeks of September. According to morgue figures, at least 334 people were killed in Baghdad between August 27 and September 2. The majority had been kidnapped and tortured, before
they were tied and shot to death. Authorities said that at least 394 other people in Iraq were killed by other means of violence including bombings, mortar attacks and gunfights.

In Adhamiya, a predominantly Sunni neighborhood of northeastern Baghdad, dozens of dead bodies were discovered each week, and one particular street became so notorious for its body dumps that residents referred to it as “The Street of Death.”

The Baghdad morgue reported receiving 1,535 bodies in August. And while the tally represented a 17 percent decrease from numbers in July, they still indicated strikingly high levels of violence, and contradicted earlier claims by American officials that death rates had significantly declined.

**Deadly Reprisal Attacks**

Four of the bloodiest attacks of the year took place in July, killing 220 people among them. Increasingly, attacks involved large-scale revenge killings, targeting of holy sites, and inflammatory exchanges of blame between Sunni and Shi’ite factions. In the first 18 days of July, sectarian or insurgent–related violence claimed the lives of at least 695 Iraqis, and wounded 1,029.

These numbers represented a sharp increase over figures reported during the same period in 2005, when an Associated Press count showed that at least 450 Iraqis were killed. There was an average of 34 attacks per day in the week following July 13 in and around the capital—representing an increase of 40 percent from the 24 registered attacks between June 14 and July 13.

The cycle of violence in July began with the bombing of a small Shi’ite mosque in the Jihad neighborhood of southwest Baghdad on July 8. The following morning, in what was widely interpreted as a reprisal attack, Shi’ite militiamen rampaged through the Sunni neighborhood of Jihad in Baghdad, indiscriminately executing those identified as Sunnis. According to witness accounts, the gunmen set up checkpoints along main commercial streets and demanded identification cards, forced Sunnis out of their homes, or off sidewalks, and executed them in brought daylight. The death toll from the shootings varied; while the American military reported fewer than a dozen killed, some news agencies put the figure at over 50. Only hours after the rampage, two car bombs exploded near a Shi’ite mosque in northern Baghdad, killing at least 17, and wounding 38 according to the Associated Press.

Several Sunni Arab political and religious leaders blamed Iraqi and American security forces for their failure to prevent the violence. Iraq’s Deputy Prime Minister for Security Affairs Salam al-Zobai accused the Ministries of Defense and Interior of collaborating with the militias to carry out attacks. “Interior and Defense Ministries are infiltrated,” he said. “And there are officials who lead brigades who are involved in this.”

Collaboration between security forces and the militias ranks among the most sensitive, and potentially volatile issues in Iraq. The following witness account of the July 9 Jihad killings was reported in the Washington Post:

Saleh Muhammed, an Amiriyah resident, told a Post special correspondent that he dialed 130 into his cell phone, Baghdad's emergency number. “The Mahdi Army has attacked Amiriyah,” he told the Interior Ministry dispatcher.
“The Mahdi Army are not terrorists like you,” said the dispatcher at the ministry, which is controlled by a Shi’ite party and operates closely with militias. "They are people doing their duty. And how could you know that they are the Mahdi Army? Is it written on their foreheads?" He hung up the phone.

Meanwhile, al-Maliki’s office moved to distance itself from al-Zobai’s statement, reporting that his comments “do not represent the government’s point of view.” 327 Some Jihadi residents and Sunni Arab leaders accused the Mahdi Army of committing the killings, but the organization denied the allegations. Some US officials said that the Madhi army, which once confined its activities to protecting the cleric’s territory and trying to gain control of towns in southern Iraq, had become a criminal organization engaging in “homicides, kidnapping, and robberies in the Baghdad area.”328

The country’s largest Sunni bloc said that it would end its 10-day boycott of Parliament in the interest of national unity following the attack. (The bloc had suspended their participation on July 2 after a colleague, Tayseer Najah al-Mashhadani, was kidnapped).

On July 12, gunmen kidnapped a group of people at a parking lot of a bus station, and killed 22 of them in execution-style slayings. All of the victims were Shi’ites. And five days later, masked gunmen carrying rocket launchers and grenades killed at least 42 people in a predominately Shi’ite market in Mahmoudiya. While the details of the attacks were not clear, several witnesses said that the violence began when Sunni gunmen opened fire on a funeral for a member of the Mahdi army, killing nine mourners.329

The following day, at least 45 Iraqis were killed and 88 injured in a suicide bombing near a Shi’ite shrine in the southern city of Kufa. The attacker drove a minivan to an area where Shi’ite laborers gather in search of work, offered them jobs, and loaded the minivan with volunteers before detonating the vehicle. In the wake of the attack, the Shi’ite television station Al-Forat broadcast inflammatory remarks by Shi’ites who blamed the attack on Sunni extremists, and expressed frustration that Sunni politicians were unable to prevent the Sunni insurgent uprising. The main Sunni bloc condemned the Shi’ite-dominated security forces for failing to control the situation, and argued that the attack likely came in retaliation for the kidnapping of seven Sunnis, whose bodies were discovered the day before in the town of Mahmoudiya.330

The Ominous Question of Civil War

During this period of violence, al-Maliki was cautious in his comments—likely struggling to acknowledge the recent surge of militia activity in spite of his government’s efforts to curb sectarian violence, including the implementation of a security crackdown in Baghdad and the introduction of the National Reconciliation Plan in June. At a July 10 press conference though, he said, “I don’t see the country falling into a civil war, despite the regrettable activities of certain people who ignore that Iraq is united.” 331

Other assessments of the situation however, were grimmer. Increasingly, Iraqi politicians, as well as some US officials, were speaking of the beginning of a civil war, or questioning the capability of the nascent government to hold the country together. Wafiq al-Samarrae, an adviser to Iraqi President Talibani said on Al-Jazeera on July 10, “We’ve said it several times that there are people who want to create civil war. Today this country is on the verge of civil war, not sectarian strife.” 332 A Shi’ite legislator Haidar al-Ibadi echoed this observation: “Certainly, what is happening is the start of civil war. It is a dangerous situation in which the people involved now are being dragged into massive killings.” 333

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The cycle of reprisal killings weakened the credibility of al-Malaki’s government, and widened the political fault-lines in an already-fragile government. A leading Sunni legislator, Salehh al-Mutlek, said, “This is a hopeless government. It has not done one good thing since it started, and things are getting worse, not better...The parliament cannot reach practical solutions because their minds are concerned only with their sect and no the interests of the nation. It looks like the government is going to collapse very soon.”

According to an article in the Miami Herald, some US officials acknowledged privately “that their hopes that Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki will be able to rein in Shi’ite militia groups and persuade Sunni insurgents to negotiate may be misplaced.” “Many of the government’s leaders,” they noted, “were themselves linked to Shi’ite or Kurdish militias or guerrilla groups.”

In late July, Rida Jawad al-Takki, a senior Member of Parliament from the Shi’ite Alliance Bloc said, “The situation is terrifying and black...We have received information of a plan to divide Baghdad. The government is incapable of solving the situation.”

Meanwhile, in Washington, Gen. John P. Abizad told a Senate Committee on August 3, “I believe that the sectarian violence is probably as bad as I’ve seen it, in Baghdad in particular, and that if not stopped, it is possible that Iraq could move towards civil war”—a statement that represented perhaps the most sober official military assessment since the commencement of the war. Following General Abizad’s testimony, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee and a staunch supporter of the president, Senator John W. Warner of Virginia, said that if Iraq slid into civil war, the committee might need to re-examine whether the authorization for the use of American forces in Iraq was still applicable.

And US officials were facing increased pressure at home to acknowledge and justify the deteriorating conditions in Iraq. Defense Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld responded to Senator Hilary Clinton’s criticism of the administration’s “record of incompetence in executing” its war-fighting policy by saying, “First of all, it’s true, there is a sectarian conflict in Iraq, and there is a loss of life. And it’s an unfortunate and tragic thing that’s taking place. And it is true that there are people who are attempting to prevent that government from being successful,” but, he added, “the idea of them prevailing is unacceptable.”

As ethnic fault lines were deepening in Iraq, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the most prominent religious authority in the country, issued a statement saying that the time has come for “all those who value the unity and future of this country” to “exert maximum efforts to stop the bloodletting.” He called on “all Iraqis of different sects and ethnic groups to be aware of the danger threatening the future of the country and stand side-by-side against it.”

The August 2006 DoD quarterly report to Congress, “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq,” noted the risk of rising sectarian tensions “manifested in an increasing number of execution style killings, kidnappings, and attacks on civilians, and increasing numbers of internally displaced persons.” And while the report stated that the “conditions that could lead to civil war exist in Iraq,” it maintained that “the current violence is not a civil war, and movement toward civil war can be prevented.”

Amid the growing sense that the country was on the brink of a civil war, the fledgling Iraqi government faced a renewed sense of urgency to contain sectarian violence, and exert authority over an increasingly factionalized Iraq. If Iraqis became skeptical of the government’s ability to protect them, they would be more likely to turn to religious-based militias for security.
Maliki’s new government would then face the risk of becoming a hollow shell of official authority held up by the American presence, while real power was vested in the hands of militia members—presiding over a failed state.

**Figure II.9: Concern of Civil War: November 2005-August 2006**

Percentage of respondents that were very/somewhat concerned that a civil war might break out

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Baghdad</th>
<th>Kurdish Areas</th>
<th>Mosul</th>
<th>Kirkuk</th>
<th>Tikrit/Baquba</th>
<th>Mid-Euphrates</th>
<th>South</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2005 November</strong></td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2006 March</strong></td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2006 August</strong></td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq,” Department of Defense Report to Congress, August 2006, p. 35. Data points are estimates from figure in the DoD document. Department of State, Office of Research, November 2005/March 2006/August 2006 Sample sizes: November 2005: Baghdad-1,365; Kurdish Areas-637; Mosul-521; Kirkuk-213; Tikrit/Baquba-597; Mid-Euphrates-1,017; South-910 March 2006: Baghdad-213; Kurdish Areas-313; Mosul-123; Kirkuk 112; Tikrit/Baquba-211; Mid-Euphrates-550; South-448 August 2006: Baghdad-911; Kurdish Areas-469; Mosul-371; Kirkuk-142; Tikrit/Baquba-361; Mid-Euphrates-678; South-684 Margin of error: ±4% for the overall sample, but varies among regions.

**Internal Displacement**

The surge in violence exacerbated the internal displacement crisis in Iraq. According to Sattar Nowruz, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Displacement and Migration, in only one week in
July, 1,117 families abandoned mixed areas for Shi’ite and Sunni strongholds. He said that nearly 27,000 families, or the equivalent of 162,000, people have registered for relocation since the February 22 bombing of the Shi’ite shrine in Samarra, and this internal migration was “a dangerous sign” of religious segregation.\textsuperscript{342}

**Transferring Control to Iraqi Forces**

Coalition forces handed over control of the southern Iraqi province of Muthanna to Iraqi forces on July 13, which became the first province placed entirely under Iraqi authority. In a joint statement, General George Casey and US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad said, “The handover represents a milestone in the successful development of Iraq’s capability to govern and protect itself as a sovereign and democratic nation.”\textsuperscript{343} Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki described the transfer as an important step in the process of transferring all 18 provinces to Iraqi authorities by the end of 2007.\textsuperscript{344}

On August 8, another security transfer took place. US military commanders handed over lead security control of Salahuddin, Nineveh, and Tamin provinces to the Iraqi army’s 4\textsuperscript{th} Division. The territory extended from the foothills of Iraq’s eastern territory west to the Syrian border. While Iraqi forces would still need to depend on the US military for intelligence, logistical assistance, and heavy artillery, the transfer handed off to Iraqis “primary responsibility for coordinating, planning, and conducting security operations in the three-province area.”\textsuperscript{345}

On the day of the security handover, Iraq’s National Security Advisor Mowaffak al-Rubaie announced that “half of the Iraqi army [was] now under control of Iraqis,” and added, “We believe they will be much more competent in fighting terrorism.”\textsuperscript{346} General George Casey applauded the development, and said, “First we had to build and train them. Then we put them in the lead, and we’ll ultimately help them become independent.”\textsuperscript{347}

Although the transfer of security control to Iraqi forces represented an achievement for US efforts in Iraq, the deteriorating security conditions in the country seemed to overshadow the significance of these gains. According to a report by the Government Accountability Office submitted to Congress in July, “even as the number and capabilities of Iraqi security forces have increased, overall security conditions have deteriorated, as evidenced by attack trends, sectarian violence, and the growth and influence of militias.”\textsuperscript{348}

While security control of the three-province area of Salahuddin, Nineveh, and Tamin was being handed over to Iraqi forces, more American troops were being deployed in the capital as part of the second phase of Operation Together Forward, implemented to curb sectarian violence in Baghdad. Such developments cast doubt on a linchpin of the current US strategy in Iraq—that training more Iraqi forces would allow American troops to return home.

**Real Progress and Real Problems in the Summer of 2006**

The beginning of June seemed to present some real successes on both the political and security fronts. The Iraqi cabinet, with the approval of the ministers of the interior, defense and national security posts, was complete. After a month of near constant operations against al-Qa’ida in Iraq, al-Zarqawi, the leader of the organization was killed in a US air strike, and dozens of subsequent operations were carried out in the area.
Nonetheless, real political, security and economic problems persisted. The constant low-level civil conflict continued on a daily bases in cities such as Baghdad. Crime and corruption continued to be crippling problems for the nascent government and the existence of militias, in both Shi‘ite and Sunni areas, was a testament to the fact that the government still could not provide security in critical cities and illustrated the general deterioration of the security environment. Violence had grown worse in the once quiet Shi‘ite south left to govern itself as various militias backed by political leaders openly fought within the city. The imposition of Sharia, by threat and force in some cases, eroded any democratic progress that had taken place.

The UNAMI Human Rights update for May and June 2006 reported “insurgent, militia, and terrorist attacks continued unabated in many parts of Iraq, especially in Baghdad and in the central and western regions, with an increasing sectarian connotation.” According to the report, a total of 5,818 civilians were killed and at least 5,762 wounded in May and June. The report described the humanitarian conditions in Iraq as follows:349

Killings, kidnappings and torture remain widespread. Fear resulting from these and other crimes continued to increase internal displacement and outflows of Iraqis to neighboring countries. The negative effect of violence on professional categories, targeted by sectarian and criminal violence, displaced as a result, coupled with inadequate provision of basic services, also affected the level of education and health care received by the population. Women, children and vulnerable groups, such as minorities, internally displaced and disabled persons continue to be directly affected by the violence and the ongoing impunity for human rights violations. Organized crime and corruption have persistently added to overall insecurity.

The “Sunni” insurgency still operated in the west and by June there were reports that these groups, both Islamist and “nationalist,” had control over parts of Ramadi. Moreover, Baghdad had become “ground-zero” for the war. Outside of the Green Zone tit-for-tat sectarian abductions and killings, suicide bombings and car bomb attacks were carried out by a combination of criminal gangs, insurgents and militia members. In May alone, at least 2,155 people died in the capital.350 The death of Zarqawi, although a success, threw another variable into the equation. The impact of his demise on the insurgency was only a matter for speculation.

For all of the political progress, important hurdles remained. The numerous outstanding issues and laws within the Constitution needed to be settled and would likely prove far more contentious and require far more compromise if the Iraqi government was to succeed, than forming a coalition government. The militias, which in many ways were Iraq’s greatest security threat, remained a divisive political issue that could only be solved by making tough decisions and taking real actions to implement them.

The July-August 2006 UNAMI report on human rights elucidated that extremist groups continually targeted ethnic and religious minorities. The Sabean-Mandeans minority expressed fears that due to killings and migration, their thousands of years presence in Iraq would cease. In multi-ethnic Kirkuk, tensions remained heightened, and the Turkoman population felt particularly victimized. The region of Kurdistan reported the arrival of many Christian groups from Baghdad, where they experienced attacks from various extremist militias. Additionally, in Mosul and the Ninewa plain, the Shabak minority cited continued subjection to violence and intimidation. The community reports that one hundred were killed between June and August 2006. All of the minorities feared political marginalization and worried about the lack of recognition of minorities in the Iraqi constitution.
The UNAMI report also voiced concern over the conditions and legality of detention centers in Iraq. The Ministry of Human Rights in Iraq reported 35,542 detainees at the end of August 2006. The majority of the detainees were held by the Ministry of Justice and MNF-I. Several thousand of detainees were “held outside the legal framework partly due to the fact that the Iraqi courts do not have the capacity to adjudicate such a high number of cases.” However, the report added that several hundred more judges were to be licensed by mid 2007, which would help with trying the unmanageable number of detainees.

Detainees held by MNF-I, MOD, MOI, and MOJ forces continued to be subject to torture during their interrogation. It was also clear that sectarian militias and death squads tortured their victims to find information about their sect. The majority of the bodies appearing at the morgues and on the streets showed signs of torture, such as electrocution, beating, burning, and broken bones. The UN’s Chief Rapporteur on torture also said that torture may have been more widespread than it was during Saddam Hussein’s regime.

**Democracy, Deadlock, and Death squads**

The appointment of the Ministers of the Interior, Defense, and State for National Security Affairs in early June had marked the complete formation of the national unity government. At that time, Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki laid out three primary pillars for his national strategy going forward: (1) working to heal ethnic and sectarian strife through a campaign of “national reconciliation;” (2) strengthening Iraq’s security forces, and either absorbing or disbanding militias; and (3) rebuilding Iraq’s infrastructure.

The cornerstone of al-Maliki’s program for political inclusion was the National Reconciliation and Dialogue Plan, which aimed to draw insurgent elements of the armed opposition into the political process. The initiative demonstrated unprecedented will by the nascent Iraqi government to put key issues on the table, and to engage in unified talks with Sunni insurgent groups. But the final document, emerging after rounds of debate, was little more than a vague statement of principles that skirted divisive issues, including conditions of amnesty for insurgents, and the disbanding of militias. And the controversy unleashed in the process, revealed conflicting agendas within the government, deeply divided along sectarian lines, and plagued by historical tensions.

The four-point plan of neighborhood committees proposed in September sought to amend some of the original gaps in the National Reconciliation and Dialogue Plan. The primary goal of the committees was to involve citizens in efforts to rout out militias, and create more trust in security forces in the process. The plan was the first tangible acknowledgement by al-Maliki of militia infiltration into MOI forces. Sunni and Shi’ite legislators both agreed on the plan, but Sunni lawmakers remained doubtful that it would succeed in disbanding sectarian militias.

Sunni legislators succeeded in postponing any official separation of the country until 2008, but Kurdish and some Shi’ite parties unanimously passed a law allowing for the creation of autonomous regions when the time came. Kurdish parties won a significant victory with the passing of the separation bill. The Kurds distanced themselves from the civil war unfolding in Baghdad and sought to secure oil revenues for themselves for the regional government.

Political negotiations in the fall were characterized by accusations on all sides. Sunni and Shi’ite legislators blamed each other for the ongoing violence, bringing reconciliation dialogue to a grinding halt.
While political negotiations came to a standstill, US efforts to strengthen Iraqi forces—supported by al-Maliki’s commitment to the process—moved ahead. American troops began handing over security control to their Iraqi counterparts. In July, Muthanna became the first province to be placed completely under Iraqi authority and Dhi Qar followed in September. But even as the number and capabilities of Iraqi security forces became more robust, overall security conditions in the country were rapidly declining, leading some to question whether the new Iraqi security structure—infiltrated by an assortment of militias—could successfully secure the country for the future. The US military announced that troops would remain at their current strength of 145,000 in the capital until at least spring, 2007.

Amid widespread violence in the country, economic conditions continued to deteriorate. Iraqis faced a severe fuel crisis, joblessness, high inflation rates, and a burgeoning black market. Sorely needed reconstruction projects were hampered by insurgent attacks, rampant crime and corruption, a lack of consistent funding, delays, and poor logistical planning.

The argument for decentralization also became stronger among the US military in the early fall. US forces battling sectarian militias saw that for most Iraqis, national interest was not a priority. Religious obligations were far more important than national unity, and tribal affiliation ran even deeper. Maj. Gen. J.D. Thurman, commander of US forces in Baghdad, said, “Part of our problem is that we want this [national unity] more than they do.”353 Al-Maliki’s government thus held little sway over the country and its calls for peace went largely unacknowledged. The US military would find itself in an impossible battle in trying to instill a sentiment of national unity among all Iraqis.

Confronted by an increasingly volatile political, security, and economic environment, al-Maliki’s ambitious national strategy was outstripped by more immediate concerns of stemming the civil war, and restoring public faith in his government.

The insurgency in Iraq has become a “war after the war” that threatens to divide the country and create a full-scale civil conflict. It has triggered sectarian and ethnic violence that dominates the struggle to reshape Iraq as a modern state, has emerged as a growing threat to the Gulf region, and has become linked to the broader struggle between Sunni and Shi’ite Islamist extremism, and moderation and reform, throughout the Islamic world.

Since its inception in the spring of 2003, the nature of the fighting in Iraq has evolved from a struggle between Coalition forces and former regime loyalists to a much more diffuse conflict, involving a number of Sunni groups, Shi’ite militias, and foreign jihadists, and which has spread to become a widespread civil conflict.

In the process, the complex patterns of conflict in Iraq have become a broad struggle for sectarian and ethnic control of political and economic space. Open violence has become steadily more serious, but it is only part of the story. Shi’ite, Sunni, and Kurdish factions increasingly organize to provide local security while seeking to push other factions out of areas where they have the majority. These problems have been compounded by de facto exclusion of many ex-Ba’ath members and professionals that form the secular and nationalist core of the country, and the slow purging of other nationalists who do not take a sectarian and ethnic side from Ministries and professions.

The War for Sectarian and Ethnic Control of Space

Killing and casualties are only part of this story. The map of sectarian and ethnic violence is far broader than the major incidents of violence reported by the MNF-I and Iraqi government. There are no accurate or reliable counts of such dead and wounded because they cannot be counted with any reliability even in the Baghdad area. However, a count kept by the Associated Press estimated that 13,738 Iraqis – civilians and security forces - died violently in 2006. The UN reported that 34,452 Iraqi civilians died in 2006. Groups like Iraq Body Count reported that a total of roughly 56,000 Iraqis civilians died since 2003. At the extremes, a Lancet study based on a highly uncertain methodology and sampling method estimated that 650,000 Iraqis have died since 2003.

Tragic as such estimates are, other forms of “cleansing” have become at least as important as major overt acts of violence. Shi’ites and Sunnis, and Arabs and Kurds, seek to dominate the other side or push the weaker side out of areas where they have the majority or have superior power. These forms of “soft” ethnic cleansing include threats, physical intimidation, blackmail, seizure of property, raids on homes and businesses, use of checkpoints to push other factions out, kidnappings and extortion, misuse of government offices and police, and disappearances.

Maps of Baghdad and other major cities with mixed populations show a steady separation of the population on sectarian and ethnic lines, and reflect the efforts of the dominant side to push the other out or exclude it. Another measure of the level of conflict which goes beyond the data on killings is the number of refugees. At the end of 2006, the UN reported that there were 1.7 million internally displaced Iraqis since 2003, with an average of 45,000 Iraqis leaving their homes every month.

In spite of Coalition forces’ initiatives to stem the violence, train Iraqi forces, and build public faith in political institutions, ethnic and sectarian tensions continued to push the country deeper
into civil war. The February 22, 2006 bombing of the Golden Mosque was only the most visible symbol of a pattern of Sunni-Shi’ite clashes that began in 2003, steadily grew in 2004 and 2005, and became a major civil conflict in 2006. Different factions built up their militias, and infiltrated the new Iraqi security forces. Shi’ite militias became the primary challenge facing the Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, and the Shi’ite community itself fragmented into rivaling parties.

Sectarian fighting in Baghdad and surrounding urban areas between Shi’ite militias and loosely organized Sunni armed groups – with ties to terrorist groups or ex-Ba’athists – produced the most openly violent signs of civil conflict. Al-Qa’ida in Iraq operated out of Anbar province and sought to unite the various Sunni insurgent groups. Tensions between Kurds, Arabs, and Turcomans intensified the ethnic dimension of the war and violent inter-Shi’ite rivalries in the south threatened to divide the majority. Ultimately, these developments had the effect of blurring the distinction between the threat of an insurgency and that of a civil war.

In the process, sectarian and ethnic divisions have expanded from struggles by extremists and activists to actions by popular movements with a steadily broader base. While most Iraqis still express support for national unity in public opinion polls, the base for violence and cleansing expanded to include more and more of the population in areas where there was sectarian and ethnic tension and violence. This is particularly true where militias and local security forces provide the only real local security, where young men have little employment, and where the struggle for control of villages, cities, and neighborhoods has become a struggle for housing, businesses, and the ability to conduct a normal life.

**Key Trends in the Winter of 2006 - 2007**

In the winter of 2006 - 2007 Iraqis faced continued high levels of violence, and growing pressures for sectarian and ethnic separation, carried out both by a tangled set of warring factions and various local and national political leaders. As the nature of the civil struggle became more complex, the prospects for national reconciliation grew less probable. Changes in the dynamics of the fighting, the struggle for political and economic space, and the character of the insurgency and civil conflict, largely centered on the following set of emerging trends:

- Broad struggles existed in most of the country with mixed populations for control or dominance by Shi’ite, Sunni, and Kurdish factions, often driving out smaller minorities or suppressing them. This series of struggles was difficult to map or quantify, but affected virtually every governorate. Kurd-Arab struggles were particularly important in the north near Kirkuk, the northern oil fields, to the east of Mosul, and in areas with a Turcoman population. Sectarian cleansing continued to be a major problem in the Basra areas and in many towns and villages, and rural areas throughout the country with mixed Sunni and Shi’ite populations.

- The leaders of Iraq’s central government still publicly sought national unity and conciliation, and the Maliki government publicly supported President Bush in a new strategy designed to defeat both Sunni and Shi’ite extremists. Key Shi’ite leaders; however, seemed to prepare more and more for the prospect of seeking Shi’ite dominance in a struggle with Arab Sunnis. Kurdish leaders showed growing concern over Kurdish rights and autonomy, and Sunni leaders who participated in the political process showed more and more fear as they faced a breakdown of conciliation and compromise and future conflict with Shi’ites. The Ministries of the government increasingly divided their personnel and spending efforts along sectarian and ethnic lines and often by party. Similar favoritism, purges, and control of spending affected government activity at the governorate and local level, compounded by massive corruption, nepotism, and personal favoritism.
• Sectarian fighting, led by the growth of some 23 militias around Baghdad, was particularly violent and the resulting killings were easiest to map and quantify. Moqtada al-Sadr’s Mahdi Army developed rogue components that acted outside of his command. Sunnis formed loosely organized neighborhood death squads in the urban areas, some with ties to al-Qai’da or ex-Ba’athist groups.

• Baghdad and other major cities were increasingly divided into sectarian strongholds as both Sunnis and Shi’a fled neighborhoods in which they were a minority. Soft ethnic cleansing created 1.7 million internally displaced persons by the end of 2006, according to the United Nations. Adhamiya and Kadhamiya were described as the most sensitive areas in Baghdad because they both lay in the “opposite” sectarian area. Other disputed towns included the Shi’ite city of Samarra – located a mainly Sunni area – and the Sunni cities of Yusifiya, Mahmudiya, and Iskandariya, which lay in the Shi’ite south.

• The Sunni Arab insurgency was still concentrated in Anbar province, but attacks in Baghdad, Balad Ruz, and Mosul showed the wide extent of their impact, and the level of violence grew in governorates like Diyala. US and Iraqi forces made some progress in Falluja, but Ramadi remained a contested city. After the death of al-Zarqawi, the Mujahedeen Shura Council sought to unify insurgent elements and created the Islamic State of Iraq – an intended eight province Sunni Arab autonomous region. In 2006, ten insurgent groups joined the Mujahedeen Council and Islamic State.

• According to the Iraq Casualty Count, 115 US soldiers died in December, but if killed and wounded are counted, the overall trend in US causalities was roughly equally high in the last four months of 2006. According to Iraqi government sources, December was also the deadliest for Iraqi civilians with 1,927 dying violently. The Health Ministry reported that 22,950 Iraqi civilian and security forces died violently in 2006. The United Nation’s figure for civilians killed in Iraq was 34,452. The Department of Defense report “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq” for August-November stated that total attacks rose 22% from the previous reporting period, making for an average of 960 attacks a week. Overall, 55% of all attacks occurred in Baghdad and Anbar Provinces.

• The Shi’ite community was increasingly divided along party and militia lines, although the individual parties had their own divisions by leader and many elements of the militias operated on their own or outside any clear central hierarchy controlled by the party leadership. For example, armed elements of al-Sadr’s Mahdi Army clashed with Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) supporters in Samawah, Muthanna Province in late December, and US intelligence experts observed numerous incidents indicating that local militia leaders, particularly in the Mahdi Army, operated on their own and with little regard to the central leadership.

• Turkey pledged their support for the minority Turcoman population in Iraq and urged Iraq to take action against PKK rebel activity in the Kurdish north.

• Regional players, particularly Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iran, and Turkey were increasingly concerned about the spread of civil war across the region.

Little Progress in the Search for Conciliation

On the political front, the government of Prime Minister al-Maliki was unable to make major progress in the reconciliation dialogue amid the security crisis. Maliki continued to pursue a political solution to the crisis, and indicated he would seek to control the Shi’ite militias, including that of al-Sadr. The Prime Minister, and other key leaders like Hakim, however, placed most of the blame for Iraq’s violence on the Sunni insurgents, clearly favored the Shi’ite cause, and were open less optimistic about reconciliation than they had been in the past. Tensions between Sunni and Shi’ite legislators remained heightened as both sects accused each other of propagating sectarian killings by supporting death squads.

Intra-Shi’ite tensions were a key factor limiting political progress. SCIRI, led by Hakim, differed from Moqtada al-Sadr on the key issues of federalism, oil distribution, and views of the coalition
forces. SCIRI loyalists in parliament engaged in efforts to reduce Sadr’s political power and influence over Prime Minister Maliki.

A National Reconciliation Conference took place on December 16, but key players were absent and the dialogue had little effect. Sadr’s bloc boycotted parliament from mid December until late January, and Sadr loyalists demonstrated against the US and Iraqi operations aimed at Mahdi Army members. Al-Maliki did announce the cabinet positions that would be reshuffled, which included health, transportation, culture, woman’s affairs, and tourism. Members of the Iraqi Parliament also stated that they were near a compromise on the crucial oil law.

Political negotiations failed to find a solution to the violence, but the US continued to hand over control of security operations to Iraqi Security Forces. On December 20 the US handed over control of Najaf province to Iraq. The original target goal for Iraqi security forces, 325,000, was reached, but many had deserted, were on unauthorized leave, were not operational, or had died in the violence. Maliki authorized the addition of at least 30,000 forces. US and Iraqi officials also announced an initiative to rein in the 150,000 man Facilities Protection Service, which had Shi’ite sectarian alliances. The British faced a setback in training efforts in Basra where they raided and disbanded the Serious Crimes Unit. The police recruits numbered 600 in Ramadi, Anbar Province in December - the largest number to date.

**A National Struggle, not one for Control of Baghdad**

While much of the US and MNF-I reporting concentrated on Baghdad as the center of the sectarian conflict, violence spread to surrounding towns as the civil war threatened to engulf the entire country. Sectarian violence in the Diyala province escalated and closed down the provincial capital of Baquba. Violence also increased in the northern cities of Mosul and Kirkuk during the reporting period between Shi’a, Sunni, and Kurds.

According to polls included in the Department of Defense “Measuring Security and Stability in Iraq” report for August – November 2006 Iraqi public opinion fell of the government’s ability to improve security conditions. The degree to which respondents felt safe was related to sectarian composition of their province; citizens in mixed areas such as Baghdad and Mosul were less likely to feel safe than individuals in Maysan Province.

The widespread violence in the country made economic conditions continue to deteriorate. Iraqis faced a severe fuel crisis, joblessness, high inflation rates, and a burgeoning black market. Oil production remained below pre-invasion levels and electricity averaged less than 5 hours a day in Baghdad. Education, healthcare, and the rule of law continued to suffer. Several reports did point to positive economic growth in 2006.

The steady deterioration in Iraqi security and stability also forces changes in US strategy. President Bush announced changes in military and diplomatic command in Iraq as well as the new US strategy on January 10, 2007. He announced that he was sending an additional 17,500 US troops to Baghdad and 4,000 to Anbar Province. The troops would support the Iraqi security forces in stopping escalation to full scale civil war by securing the capital and engaging in an accelerated adviser effort to Iraqi forces. The President also committed additional US funds for reconstruction and the expansion of Provincial Reconstruction Teams. Finally, he gave the Iraqi government a set of political, economic and security benchmarks for 2007.
Still Working Towards National Reconciliation

Iraqi legislators focused on their sectarian and ethnic agendas and found little area for compromise. Sunni and some nationalist Shi’ite parties opposed any laws allowing the creation of autonomous regions, but the Kurds and most Shi’ite leaders supported some form of federation. Prime Minister Maliki took a public stance against sectarian militias, but little action followed his rhetoric. Reports surfaced of further Shi’ite militia infiltration into the security forces and direct political support. Similarly, Shi’ite politicians accused Sunnis of supporting insurgents and al-Qa’ida in Iraq.

Al-Maliki continued to urge a political solution to the security crisis, and dissuaded US and Iraqi troops from attacking Mahdi Army members in Sadr City. The creation of neighborhood committees to discuss security concerns was a step in the right direction, but Sunnis remained doubtful that the plan would stem the violence. The Iraqi government thus found itself under growing pressure to act quickly from both the US government and disheartened Iraqi civilians, who continued to pay the heavy daily price of civil war.

In a November 15 address to the Senate Armed Services Committee the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Gen. Michael Hayden, laid out the political ambitions of Iraq’s three main sectarian groups:

- The Shi’a today now focus on assuring that Iraq’s new government reflects the will of the majority Shi’a population, making sure that the Ba’athists never regain power.
- Sunnis, on the other hand, view the Shi’a as Iranian controlled and the current government as predatory – or at least many Sunnis do
- The Kurds, for their part, want to keep and strengthen the substantial autonomy they’ve exercised for more than a decade.

David Satterfield, State Department coordinator for Iraq, told the Senate Armed Services Committee that the Iraqi council of representatives accurately reflected the demographics of Iraq, but at the provincial and local levels, there needed to be new elections with Sunni participation. Mr. Satterfield said that many Sunnis boycotted the first local elections in 2005, but had participated in national elections and needed to be given another chance to have their say at the provincial level.

At the start of 2007, which US officials dubbed “the year of transition”, the Iraqi government faced serious challenges to its authority and ability to unite the country. Political infighting and boycotts hindered progress. Prime Minister Maliki announced the cabinet positions that he planned to reshuffle, which included the Sadr controlled Health Ministry.

Some parties representing the three main sects announced plans to form a coalition to enhance security and balance out the power of the Sadr bloc in the government. The coalition, however, fell apart when a Sunni group made unrealistic demands and Shi’ites lost the backing of Ayatollah Sistani. No progress was made to amend the Constitution, which contained ambiguities on over 50 key issues.

Reports continued of political affiliations with armed sectarian groups, frustrating the work of the Iraqi army and US forces in the capital. After eight tense months in office, al-Maliki announced that he would not seek a second term and that he would prefer to be done with the current one.
The leaders of Iraq’s central government still publicly sought national unity and conciliation, and the Maliki government publicly supported President Bush in a new strategy designed to defeat both Sunni and Shi’ite extremists. Key Shi’ite leaders, however, seemed to prepare more and more for the prospect of seeking Shi’ite dominance in a struggle with Arab Sunnis. Kurdish leaders showed growing concern over Kurdish rights and autonomy, and Sunni leaders who participated in the political process showed more and more fear as they faced a breakdown of conciliation and compromise and future conflict with Shi’ites.

The Ministries of the government increasingly divided their personnel and spending efforts along sectarian and ethnic lines and often by party. Similar favoritism, purges, and control of spending affected government activity at the governorate and local level, compounded by massive corruption, nepotism, and personal favoritism.

The lack of unity and reconciliation in the government and Maliki’s statement offered little hope of immediate political progress. The escalating security crisis was the primary concern for most Iraqis and they expected little from the government. MNF-Iraq spokesman Maj. Gen. William Caldwell said of the ‘year of transition’:

> We open 2007 facing significant challenges. Iraqi security forces must not only continue to improve their capabilities, but must also work to gain the confidence of all Iraqi people. The government of Iraq and the Council of Representatives will have to rise above past divisions and work to realize the people’s desire for unity. This will likely entail difficult decisions on reforms to the de-Ba’athification process, and hard compromises necessary for national reconciliation.

The August - November Department of Defense Stability and Securing report, released in mid-December, stated that the reporting period “saw incremental progress in the Government of Iraq’s willingness and ability to take over responsibility, build institutions, and to deliver essential services.” The report noted that the most important step for reconciliation was Prime Minister Maliki’s National Reconciliation and Dialogue process, but “this project has shown little progress.” The National Reconciliation Conference did take place after the reporting period for the DoD’s update, but key groups boycotted and little progress was made.

The quarterly report also pointed out the following challenges facing the Iraqi government:

> Critical domestic issues, including hydrocarbon legislation, de-Ba’athification reform, provincial elections, and demobilization of militias, must still be addressed. The failure of the government to implement concrete actions in these areas has contributed to a situation in which, as of October 2006, there were more Iraqis who expressed a lack of confidence in their government’s ability to improve the situation than there were in July 2006. It remains an urgent responsibility of the Government of Iraq to resolve the outstanding issues that inhibit political progress and to demonstrate a resolve to contain and terminate sectarian violence.

The November assessment by the Pentagon was far more realistic than previous reports and accurately pointed out the many challenges facing Iraq, although most of the blame appeared to be placed on Iraqis, rather than poor US planning.

**Growing Divides: Segregating the Country**

Throughout August and September the leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim, called for legislation that would enable provinces to form semi-autonomous states. He was particularly adamant about the need for the provinces to control their own security and petroleum resources. He advocated for a Shi’ite state in southern Iraq that would include eight provinces and much of Iraq’s oil wealth. Sunni leaders, out of fear of being...
marginalized to resource-poor central Iraq, accused Shi’a of going back on their 2005 promise to form a Parliamentary committee to discuss the issues.

Leader of the main Sunni bloc, Adnan al-Dulaimi, called for “all Iraqis - whether Sunni, Shi’ite, Arab, Kurd, Turkomen, Muslim or Christian - to stand against this scheme.” Officials from the secular coalition and the coalition loyal to Moqtada al-Sadr echoed his voice of dissention.363 The Shi’ite deputy speaker argued, “The system we agreed to after the collapse of Saddam’s regime is a regional system, and there is no turning back from this principle because it represents the will of 12 million Iraqi voters.”364

In a visible display of dissent, a bloc of Sunni, Shi’ite, and secular groups boycotted parliament on September 12, 2006 in protest of the federalism plan. Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani urged the Shi’ite party in favor, SCIRI, to stop forcing the issue in Parliament in order to prevent the collapse of the tenuous government.365

In late September, Iraqi politicians agreed to delay the creation of autonomous regions. The agreement postponed any breakup of the country until 2008 and sanctioned the immediate creation of a committee of 27 legislators to consider amendments to the constitution, an effort the Sunni bloc had been pushing for since the adoption of the constitution almost a year before. In return, Sunni parties agreed to discuss the federalism issue in Parliament at the end of September.366

A Sunni Arab heading the parliamentary committee on federalism resigned to protest the Shiite-sponsored bill, warning it would lead to further instability and bloodshed. The move by Dahfir al-Ani deepened a crisis in the Sunni Arab community and his Iraqi Accordance Front, the minority's largest political coalition and the group that brokered a compromise with Shiite and Kurdish groups to allow introduction of the federalism bill.367

On October 11, 2006 parliament passed the law that would allow for the creation of federal regions, but the regions would not be official until 2008. Sunni and opposition Shi’ite parties boycotted the session to try and prevent the vote, but the remaining 140 legislators passed all 200 provisions unanimously. The law allowed different provinces to join together to form autonomous regions with their own powers. The leader of the Sunni National Accordance Front, Adnan al-Dulaimi, said, “This is the beginning of the plan to divide Iraq.” All provinces wishing to join an autonomous region would hold a referendum at the request of at least a third of the provincial legislators.368

Eighteen months, however, may well not be enough time for Sunnis to dissuade Shi’a and Kurds against creating autonomous regions. Reconstruction projects would still be hampered by violence at some level and oil production would be concentrated in the north and south of the nation. Many Sunnis also believed that separating Iraq would further aggravate the civil war and that Sunnis would be driven from Iraq permanently. Sunni concerns were thus very real at the end of 2006.

Sunnis did have an ally in al-Sadr’s party, which held 30 parliamentary seats and controlled four ministries. Sadr continued to oppose separation on nationalistic grounds. The two parties, along with several secular lawmakers, would have hard work ahead of them in preventing the creation of autonomous regions in early 2008.

A very small number of Sunnis, however, began to favor an autonomous region in the West. On October 19 the Mujahidin Shura Council, an umbrella organization for Sunni insurgent groups,
announced the creation of an Islamic State of Iraq as an autonomous region. Several days after
the announcement, several hundred Mujahidin sympathizers marched in Ramadi showing their
support for the idea. Similar demonstrations occurred the following day in Haqlaniyah and
Haditha. Support for a Sunni region was still very small compared to Shi’ite and Kurdish
support, and most Sunnis would not acknowledge the authority of the Mujahidin Council.369
Sunni legislators made it clear that they would continue to oppose any separation on regional and
ethnic terms.

In a November 15 briefing by General Abizaid, Commander of USCENTCOM, at the Senate
Armed Services Committee, Senator Reed questioned the General about the creation of
autonomous regions. Reed asked if segregating the country was part of a Shi’ite and Kurdish
agenda and whether the result would be ethnic cleansing of Sunnis. Abizaid responded:370

The manner in which the issue of moving forward on the constitutional provisions for the formation of
federal regions was handled shows not a dominant Shi’ite unilateral agenda, but rather cross-sectarian
alliances in which Shi’a in the political process expressed very different views on what ought to be the
course forward; in which Sunnis participated very much in the decision, along with Kurds, that put off for
18 months any step by provinces to take advantage of the constitutional provisions to form a federal region.
We see this as a positive, not a negative, outcome.

Abizaid did acknowledge the divergent views of Shi’ite parties, but his statement failed to
address the fact that Iraqi discussions on the segregation issue were a dividing rather than a
unifying factor.

At the same briefing, David Satterfield, State Department coordinator for Iraq, said, “Partition in
Iraq could only be achieved at an expense of human suffering and bloodshed and forced
dislocation that would be both profound and wholly unacceptable.” He added that the Kurdish
region did not want to see Iraq segregated either because of the instability it would bring to its
borders.371

The *Iraq Study Group Report* called federalism one of the “core” issues. The report
acknowledged that a Sunni region in the west was not “economically feasible.”372 Postponing
any official separation until 2008 had momentarily put the issue on the back burner, but it
remained one for the key issues hindering political reconciliation.

The Crisis Group summarized the problem of segregating the country into autonomous regions
in a December 19, 2006 report:373

Despite significant population displacement, much of Iraq’s population still lives in areas that are at least
until recently were profoundly inter-mixed, due to labor migration, forced resettlement under past regimes
and widespread inter-marriage across ethnic, confessional and tribal lines. These remain contact zones
between various ethnic and confessional groups.

If there are ethnically or religiously “pure” areas at all, they are often minority islands in a sea of people of
a different primary identity, such as the Sunni Arab groups in many cities that have majority populations
(for example, Basra), the Shi’ite towns and villages north of Baghdad that are surrounded by Sunnis, and
the Sunni Arab towns south of Baghdad on the road from the capital to the Shi’ites’ holiest shrines in
Karbala and Najaf. One deeply contested area is the wide mixed-population belt stretching from the Syrian
border in north western Iraq to the Iranian border east of Baghdad, where various ethnic and religious
communities vie for survival, political control and access to the rich oil deposits underneath.

In such a mosaic, no simple lines can be drawn to distinguish one community from another, or at least not
without major violence between groups, within groups and even within families…
Political Answers to the Security Crisis?

In September, both US and Iraqi officials expressed concerns that the political situation was being driven by the sectarian security crisis unfolding on the streets. The “unity” government seemed unable to build consensus as sectarian parties argued over every minute detail, making Prime Minister Maliki’s job nearly impossible. Al-Maliki was caught between the need to placate Sunnis by showing that Shi’ite militias would be disarmed and losing Shi’ite popular support, particularly of al-Sadr’s Da’wa party, which held 30 seats in Parliament and controlled four ministries.

Some Sunnis also voiced concern that al-Maliki was not securing a date for withdrawal of American troops and was collaborating with Iran. An Iraqi legislator described Mr. Maliki as “backed into a corner,” and unable to keep the reconciliation dialogue moving forward. However, al-Maliki remained adamant in the early fall that a political solution could be found for the security crisis.

Sunnis and Shi’ite factions blamed one another of protecting their respective militias rather than the unity government. Both Iraqi lawmakers and civilians had reached a breaking point; Prime Minister Maliki had to deal with sectarian militias in some manner or his government would crumble beneath him.

A legislator with al-Sadr’s party accused Sunni political leaders of directly or indirectly supporting terrorism. The remarks were aimed at Sunni leader Adnan al-Dulaimi, whose bodyguard was arrested for purportedly planning suicide bombings inside the Green Zone. Sadr’s political bloc demanded a “shake-up” of Prime Minister Maliki’s cabinet, exposing further rifts in the new government. Shi’ite legislator Baha al-Aaraji added, “There is a real trust crisis. The prime minister does not trust his deputy and the speaker of Parliament does not trust his first deputy.”

The Parliament made little progress on efforts to curtail sectarian violence. Accusations of complicity from both Sunni and Shi’ite legislators brought deadlock to most debates. Mr. Maliki had faced sharp criticism from the US in September to end the daily killings and kidnappings by sectarian militias. However, on October 2 Prime Minister Maliki announced a plan to help rid the capital of sectarian militias. The security plan created local committees of political leaders, sheiks, clerics, and members of the security forces for every Baghdad neighborhood. The majority of Sunni and Shi’ite legislators endorsed the plan.

The committees had no control of actual security forces, but were responsible for dialogue between civilians and police and army forces. The committees monitored the security situation in their respective neighborhoods and arbitrated local disputes. All of the committees reported to a “central commission for peace and security,” which was responsible for coordinating with Iraqi Security Forces. Al-Maliki said of the plan, “We are doing this to end sectarianism in Iraq forever.” But some Sunni legislators – although they supported the plan – were less optimistic about its success.

The following week al-Maliki told political parties that they must get rid of their militias or get out of politics. He was confident that a political solution to removing militias from the government was still achievable. He said that he did not know of any political party that would leave the government so he hoped they would all take action against sectarian militias.
In early October Iraqi Vice President Adel Abdul Mahdi said, “The most dangerous problem for Iraq today, for the economy, security and politics, is decision-making.” The multiethnic government was finding it difficult to compromise and make political progress. Mr. Mahdi also said that the US military needed to play a more supporting role. “When the military presence is not regulated by an agreement, an Iraqi official cannot act in his own land and over his own forces in the way he should,” he said. The US military had not set a deadline for withdrawal or downsizing its forces in Iraq.378

Mr. Mahdi’s statements reflected the opinions of the majority of Iraqis. A WorldPublicOpinion.org survey conducted in early September showed that the majority of Iraqis thought that security would increase if the US withdrew its forces. And when asked if the Iraqi government were to tell the US to withdraw its forces, 78% of Iraqis thought the US would not withdraw.

Ongoing sectarian violence in October prevented constructive political dialogue. On October 9, gunmen killed the brother of Sunni Vice President Tarqi al-Hashimi. The incident sparked renewed accusations from Sunni legislators that Shi’ite politicians allowed the militias to operate and kill Sunnis. The day of the assassination, political leaders had been planning to meet to discuss ways to end the sectarian violence, but tempers were so heated that the meeting was called off.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice issued the Iraqi leaders a harsh warning that the US would not support an internally torn government and that al-Maliki had to take a stand against the militias. Yet reconciliation was difficult when sectarian reprisal killings were averaging 77 a day in October. Hassan al-Shimari, a legislator from the Shi’ite Fadila party, said, “The trust between [Sunnis and Shi’ites] is destroyed. Each side is afraid of the other, and in these meetings, the fear is increasing.”

Other lawmakers concurred and said that the meetings ended up being platforms for accusations and listings of atrocities. The leader of the Sunni National Dialogue Council said, “The Shi’ite sit and complain, and if you listened to them you’d want to reach for a handkerchief. So then we start raising our own complaints.”

Al-Shimari, however, said that the frankness was a better sign than keeping emotions hidden. “There is a seriousness now because everyone fears the situation is going to eat them alive. Before you would have political enemies greeting each other with kisses even when behind the scenes they were working against each other.”

The frustration on both sides was nearing its limit. Sunni legislators – who were backed into a corner about militia infiltration and the creation of autonomous regions – warned, “If we Sunnis remain in the condition we’re in now, we’ll be finished. If the zero hour is coming, we will take the decisions we need to defend ourselves.”379

Some Sunni politicians discussed the possibility of replacing al-Maliki’s government with a “government of national salvation.” Sunnis saw al-Maliki as incapable of restoring security to Iraq and confronting the militias. They advocated installing a group of five “strongmen” who would impose martial law and stop the civil war. The main advocate of the plan was Dr. Saleh al-Mutlak, leader of the Iraqi National Dialogue Front. He said that the interior and defense ministries needed to be “cleaned out” before peace could be restored to Baghdad.380 Al-Mutlak
had limited support for the proposal, but it again showed the gaping divisions that the government would need to overcome before national reconciliation could succeed.

In a rare interview with *USA Today* on October 13, al-Maliki laid out his goals for reconciliation and his view on militias. He said in order for the militias to be controlled, “The main step is to fix the problems we have within the Interior and Defense ministries and within the intelligence agencies.” He also blamed MNF-I for choosing quantity over quality when building the Iraqi Security Forces. He reiterated that a political solution could be found to end the violence and that both sides were close to reconciliation. He criticized US military plans to attack the Mahdi Army inside Sadr City; “It will give the wrong message – that this action is directed at Shi’ites, not the Mahdi Army. We have told the Americans that we don’t mind targeting a Mahdi Army cell inside Sadr City. But the way the international forces are thinking of confronting this issue will destroy an entire neighborhood. Of course it was rejected.” He also said that calls for federalism would diminish if the security was restored and economic recovery could begin.

Mr. Maliki was also critical of the US’s relationship with Iran. He said that he was aware of Iranian involvement in Iraqi affairs, but that some of the issues stemmed from the tense US-Iranian relationship. He asked the US and Iran to leave Iraq out of their struggle. Finally, he told *USA Today* that he hoped the US military would be out of Iraq in a few months.

On October 17 US forces arrested a senior aide to Moqtada al-Sadr. Sheik Mazin al-Saedi was suspected of kidnappings and planning attacks on US troops. When al-Maliki heard of the arrest, he met with al-Sadr in Najaf and then asked the US to release Mr. Saedi. The US military complied saying, “It’s a government of Iraq issue.” The incident underscored the difference between al-Maliki’s diplomatic approach to combating the militia problem and the US’s military strategy.

The same day that al-Maliki met with al-Sadr, he talked with Ayatollah Sistani. Maliki said his meeting with Sistani had “positive results,” but he provided no other details. Al-Sadr appeared with the Prime Minister at a news conference, and voiced his disapproval of sectarian killings. Al-Maliki did not speak in any more detail about his discussions with the Mahdi Army leader.

Tensions arose again in late October between Mr. Maliki’s political solution to the militias and the US’s military approach. On October 25 Iraqi forces, with US air power backup, raided Sadr City. The raid was aimed at capturing a “top illegal armed group commander directing widespread death squad activity.” The US military later identified the rogue Mahdi Army commander as Abu Dera, but said the raid did not succeed in capturing him. US and Iraqi forces had previously targeted Dera in a failed July 7 raid in Sadr City, according to a *Reuters* report.

In the process, the October joint raid killed ten and wounded 2. Prime Minister Maliki said that he was not consulted before the raid began. Maliki publicly disavowed the mission and said, “We will ask for clarification about what has happened in Sadr City. We will review this issue with the multinational forces so that it will not be repeated… The Iraqi government should be aware and part of any military operation.” Following the raid, the *New York Times* reported that residents from Sadr City were seen protesting in the streets and condemning US forces.

Mr. Maliki also condemned top US military and diplomatic officials for stating on October 24 that Iraq had agreed to develop a “timeline” by the end of 2006 for stabilizing the country. In a joint press conference General George Casey and Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad said Iraqi officials agreed that Iraqi Security Forces would take full control of security by 2008. Khalilzad
said, “Iraqi leaders have agreed to a timeline for making the hard decisions needed to resolve [security] issues. Iraqi leaders must step up to achieve key political and security milestones on which they have agreed.” It was not clear what the milestones were, but Khalilzad did mention creating a system to share oil wealth among sectarian groups.\footnote{387}

However, al-Maliki said, “I affirm that this government represents the will of the people and no one has the right to impose a timetable on it.” He added that the timetable was a result of the upcoming congressional elections in the US.\footnote{388} The political controversy and the unsanctioned raid on Sadr City underscored the growing discord between American and Iraqi strategy to save the country from full-scale civil war.

On November 15, State Department coordinator for Iraq, David Satterfield, said before the Senate Armed Services Committee that the dispute of the timeline was “resolved” and he told Congress not to “overplay the significance.”\footnote{389} Al-Maliki made no further statements to say that he agreed with the timelines and the exact content of “political benchmarks” remained unclear.

The last week in October saw a marked increase in violence in Sadr City. The US military had installed checkpoints around the city in efforts to find a US soldier purportedly held by the Mahdi Army in Sadr City. US troops were also looking for Abu Dera, a rogue militia member, who they failed to capture in a raid earlier in the month. The checkpoints remained for several days, but on October 31 Prime Minister Maliki ordered their removal. The checkpoints had effectively isolated the Shi’ite neighborhood, but had done little to reduce violence. On October 30 a bomb killed 33 Shi’ite laborers while they waited for work. A car bomb also killed three and wounded five.\footnote{390} Maliki’s move clearly centered on maintaining the support of his Shi’ite base and al-Sadr’s political party. Sunni politicians, however, condemned al-Maliki’s move. Sunni Vice President Tareq al-Hashemi said, “I’m afraid that by lifting the siege the government sent the wrong message to those who stand behind terrorism in Iraq. It says the iron fist will loosen and they can move freely.”\footnote{391}

Al-Maliki’s rhetoric against militias at the end of October was harsher than it was at the end of the summer. He said, “We will strike hard at anyone who defies the law or transgresses the authority of the state.”\footnote{392} But at the same time he requested the release of captured Mahdi Army leaders and distanced himself from the joint US-Iraqi raid on Sadr City. It was clear that al-Maliki was increasingly caught between the US military’s initiative against militias and the political influence that al-Sadr held in the tenuous government.

On November 6, the Iraqi government announced that it had prepared a draft law that would allow the return of former Ba’ath government workers. Ali, al-Lami, executive director of the Supreme National Commission for de-Ba’athification, said the law would allow former Ba’athists, who disavowed the party, to return to government jobs or to receive their pension. Al-Lami said that if passed by Parliament, the law would apply to roughly 1.5 million former Ba’athists. He added that the top 3,000 Ba’ath government workers would only be given their pensions, but not be allowed to return to work, and about 1,500 of the highest level government employees would be given neither option.\footnote{393}

The Christian Science Monitor reported a month later that US representatives had been in discussion with ex-Ba’athists politicians and the old Iraqi army for several months in attempts to bring them into the political process – some three years after the CPA disbanded the old Army.
The Sunni Association of Muslim Scholars, however, denied that any interaction with the US took place. 394

Tensions between political parties in November continued to prevent reconciliation dialogue from moving forward. On November 8, the General Conference of the People of Iraq, a Sunni movement headed by politician Adnan al-Dulaimi, said that it would withdraw from the political process unless attacks against Sunni neighborhoods in Baghdad ceased. The statement accused Shi’ite militias of shelling and attacking Sunni districts and of infiltrating security forces. The General Conference also accused al-Maliki’s government of pursing a sectarian agenda and complacency in the civil conflict.395

Another report said that the National Concord Front, a bloc of three Sunni parties with 44 seats in Parliament, threatened to leave government and take up arms unless Shi’ite militias were dissolved. Sunni Vice President Tareq al-Hashemi said, “The government has not lived up to its commitments to the Concord, especially maintaining a balance among Iraq’s different groups. This is due to those working in the ministries and state institutions.”396

On November 12, Prime Minister Maliki announced that he would “shake-up” his cabinet. Sunni politicians called for a cabinet change since the summer, but for the first time al-Maliki affirmed his intentions. He made the announcement during a closed session of Parliament and did not release the names of the cabinet members that he was planning to replace or move to different positions. Maliki’s planned redistribution had Sunni and Shi’ite support, but the New York Times reported that some Sunni legislators would not be convinced until the plan was actually implemented.397 Adnan al-Dulaimi said that Maliki was considering changing ten of the 36 cabinet posts. Although al-Maliki could not take a ministerial position away from a certain political bloc, he could choose more secular or moderate members within a bloc. A member of al-Sadr’s political party said that he presented the prime minister with 18 resumes for the party’s four ministerial positions.398

The same week that he announced the cabinet shake-up, Prime Minister Maliki met with USCENTCOM head Gen. John Abizaid. A statement from al-Maliki’s office said that they discussed the security situation and the possibility of including Syria and Iran in direct talks.399

On November 16, the Iraqi government issued an arrest warrant for Sunni cleric Harith al-Dhari, Interior Minister Jawad al-Bolani told Iraqiya state television.400 Al-Dhari - head of the Association of Muslim Scholars - was wanted for “inciting violence and supporting terrorism.” The Association spokesman said the arrest warrant was political cover for “the acts of the government's security agencies that kill dozens of Iraqis every day.” He also called on Sunni members of Parliament to leave the government in protest. Most Sunni legislators agreed that issuing an arrest warrant for a popular and powerful Sunni cleric was a politically poor decision that would further alienate Iraqi Sunnis.401

From Jordan, al-Dhari said, “The arrest warrant is proof of the failure and confusion of the Iraqi government.” He added that he was simply the chosen scapegoat of the scared government, which he saw as illegitimate. He said he would return from Jordan at a later date.402

Key US officials also remained concerned that the inability of the Iraqi government to compromise would be its ultimate undoing. In a report to congress on November 15, the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Lt. Gen. Michael D. Maples, said, “Although a significant breakdown of central authority has not occurred, Iraq has moved closer to this possibility
primarily because of weak governance, increasing security challenges, and no agreement on a national compact.” He added that the inability of politicians to resolve key issues, particularly the militia problem, contributed to Sunni discontent.403

On November 21, US-led forces conducted a raid on Sadr City, despite previous condemnation of such raids by Prime Minister Maliki. The military said that the US detained seven militia suspects, but Iraqi police Capt. Mohammed Ismail said that a boy and two other people were killed in the raid and 15 others were wounded. Speaking for outside a hospital morgue, Shi’ite legislator Saleh Al-Ukailli of al-Sadr’s Da’wa party said, “I am suspending my membership in Parliament since it remains silent about crimes such as this against the Iraqi people. I will not return to Parliament until the occupation troops leave the country.”404 Al-Maliki did not personally respond to the US raid, but it was clear that neither the US military nor the Prime Minister wanted to conform to other’s strategy of how to defeat militias in the capital.

In the same committee hearing at which General Maples spoke, General Abizaid, commander of CENTCOM, told Congress that he expected joint Iraqi-US raids into Sadr City to increase. He said that all raids would be conducted with the approval of the Iraqi government, but that the “command and control arrangements are adequate for the current period.” He also said later in the briefing that he expected al-Maliki to move against the Mahdi Army using the Iraqi Army and that the dismissal of Iraqi police officers known to have ties to militias was a step in the right direction.405 It appeared that the US military was determined to urge Prime Minister Maliki to take military action against militias.

The US military did report increased complicacy from the Maliki government regarding US-Iraqi joint raids into Sadr City in early December. US forces continued to search for a missing army specialist suspected of being captured by the Mahdi Army. A US commander said, “We have a carte blanche at this point. Whereas before we had to tiptoe around these areas, now we can go in there as we like to search for out missing soldier.”406 However, it was unclear if Maliki had also sanctioned increased raids against militia suspects in Sadr City.

Tensions erupted in Iraq’s Parliament in late November as reconciliation dialogue was again stymied by accusations between Sunni and Shi’ite parties. Jalal al-Deen al-Saghir of the Shi’ite Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) clashed with Sunni politician Adnan al-Dulaimi. Saghir complained that Shi’ites living in two mainly Sunni neighborhoods in Baghdad - Adil and Jamiaa - were forced to support militias because they experienced daily attacks on their lives. “What has happened will open the gates of hell,” Saghir said. “People will lose faith in this institution and then there will be no choice but to turn to the militias.” Saghir’s comments drew an angry reaction from Dulaimi, head of the Sunni Accordance Front. “Everything Sheikh Jalal says is not true,” Dulaimi said. “Sheikh Jalal is one of the sources of sectarian strife. He shouldn't talk like this. This is a conspiracy against us.” Dulaimi added that he was being treated with disrespect, like “Iranians and Jews.”407 The accusations were an example of the tensions that plagued al-Maliki’s government in the fall of 2006 and made reaching any kind of political deal to stop the sectarian violence almost impossible.

The political crisis worsened in response to the escalating civil war. Moqtada al-Sadr threatened to withdraw support for Maliki’s government after the single largest attack since the US led invasion killed over 200 Shi’ites in Sadr City. Salih al-Ighaeli, a representative from Sadr’s
political bloc, said, “We announce that if the security situation and the basic services do not improve, and if the prime minister goes ahead and meets with the criminal Bush in Amman, then we will suspend our memberships with the Iraqi parliament and the government.” President Bush was scheduled to travel to Amman, Jordan to meet with Prime Minister Maliki the following week.408 A representative for al-Sadr said, “We blame the government for the attacks. We have no trust in the government or in the Americans.” He stated that the US military needed to set a timetable for withdrawal or leave immediately.409

Sadr’s political bloc followed through with their threat to boycott the Iraqi Parliament when al-Maliki met with Bush in Jordan. Members of the Da’wa party called it an “indefinite suspension,” but stated that the boycott did not mean they were withdrawing from the political process. The Sadr bloc’s calls for immediate withdrawal of coalition forces put al-Maliki in an difficult position as Bush promised that US troops would stay until the government asked them to leave.410

Falah Hassan Shenshel, a member of the Sadr bloc, said that boycotting politicians were working to organize a bi-sectarian alliance to end the US military presence in Iraq. When the Sadr bloc did not return to Parliament the after the talks in Jordan ended, al-Maliki called for an end to the boycott.411

Sunni leaders also expressed disapproval of the Iraqi government. Sheik Harith al-Shari, the exiled and wanted leader of the Association of Islamic Scholars, said, “I call on the Arab states, the Arab League and the United Nations to stop this government and withdraw its support from it. Otherwise, the disaster will occur and the turmoil will happen in Iraq and other countries.412

Prime Minister Maliki continued the cycle of blame, accusing Iraq’s politicians of propagating the violence at the end of November. He said, “These actions are at most the reflection of political backgrounds and wills and sometimes the reflection of dogmatic, perverted backgrounds and wills. The crisis is political, and the ones who can stop the cycle of aggravation and bloodletting of innocents are the politicians.413

On November 30, the Los Angeles Times reported that a group of some 70 Sunni clerics from across Iraq were talking about forming a religious council to unite Sunni factions and have constructive talks with Shi’ites – particularly Ayatollah Sistani. A senior member of the Sunni Muslim Scholars Association said that the group was expected to form in coming weeks. Some clerics thought it was futile, but others said it was the last option to stop the bloodshed that the government was unable to contain. Clerics from the Muslim Scholars Assn. in Basra, Nasiriya, Amara, and Samawah issues statements condemning attacks on all Iraqis and supporting reconstruction of the Shi’ite shrine in Samarra.414

In contrast, secular legislator Saleh al-Mutlaq announced the formation of an alliance – the National Salvation Front – to unite in opposition against Shi’ite parties and Prime Minister Maliki. The alliance included Shi’ite and Sunni parties that supported regional or international conferences. The parties not participating were Sadr’s Dawa party, SCIRI, and Kurdish blocs. The formation of the National Salvation Front deviated from the US led initiative urging all politicians to support al-Maliki, but it remained politically weak compared to Dawa and SCIRI.415

In mid-December several main political parties began talks to form a coalition to reduce the power of al-Sadr’s bloc. The parties involved in the maneuvering were the two main Kurdish
parties, the Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party, and al-Hakim’s SCIRI. The coalition would not try to oust Prime Minister Maliki, but rather reduce the power that al-Sadr held in Parliament.

The officials were debating whether to create the alliance within Parliament or to do so outside of the official political structure in order not to disrupt existing coalitions. One of the officials involved said, “There’s no changing of blocs in the Parliament. We’re talking about political forces rallying in the street to support the political process.” He also added that Al-Hakim may have had the ulterior goal of pushing his candidate for Prime Minster, Abdul Mehdi.416

Al-Maliki maintained that the violence in the fall and early winter of 2006 was rooted in the country’s political crisis, which was characterized by accusations between lawmakers, the inability to compromise and present a solution to the violence, a lack of political clout, and little public support. The latter problem was clear when Shi’ites loyal to al-Sadr threw stones at al-Maliki’s motorcade when he left the funeral for some of those killed in the Sadr City bombings on November 23. He was also met with shouts of “coward” and “collaborator” when he tried to calm the group of mourners.417 Thus despite efforts to support his Shi’ite base and work for a political solution with al-Sadr, the Prime Minister appeared to be rapidly losing the support of both Sunnis and Shi’ites at the end of 2006.

Al-Maliki did announce that a National Reconciliation Conference would begin on December 16, 2006, but politicians could not even agree about who to invite. Shi’ites parties opposed including Ba’athist parties in the talks and the Sunni Muslim Scholars association said they would not participate until Maliki took action against Shi’ite militias.418

In a speech at the United States Institute for Peace on December 14 Sunni Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi proposed several recommendations for progress in Iraq. Politically, he said that many of the problems in Iraq’s Parliament came from the vague Constitution. He stated the he had signed the document with the understanding that many of the issues would be debated further in Parliament and amendments would be added, but he found that those discussions were superficial.

Al-Hashimi added that the Ministries were void of Sunnis – particularly the Health Ministry – and thus Sunnis had little trust in the government. He proposed an amendment that would create two deputies of differing sects for each of the ministries to make sure decisions and appointments were not sectarian. The ambiguity of the Constitution on federalism and control of oil resources was also preventing political progress, al-Hashimi said. His confirmed that his party, the Iraqi Islamic Party, had entered talks with SCIRI and Dawa to help solve the security crisis, which was the priority at the end of 2006.

The Vice President concluded that divisions among Sunnis and Shi’a began was the US assumed that Saddam Hussein’s regime was solely Sunni and that Shi’a somehow needed to be compensated for the former regime. He thought the only way solve the problems facing Iraq at the end of 2006 was to transcend sectarian differences. He added that an admittance of mistakes by both Iraqis and the US would also Iraq move forward.

The two-day National Reconciliation Conference began on December 16, 2006, but key groups were absent. Moqtada al-Sadr and his bloc refused an invitation and no one representing Sunni insurgents was present. Thus calls for peace and compromise did not resonate on the streets and none of the attending parties produce any new ideas for how combat the violence. Maliki did
invite members of the Old Iraqi Army to join ISF, but it seemed unlikely that the conference would have much effect.  

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The August-November Department of Defense Report on Stability and Security in Iraq noted some progress in the Iraqi Parliament, but was also grimly realistic in its assessment:  

The Council of Representatives has made progress in several areas, including approving the Executive Procedures to Form Regions Law, passing the Investment Law, and forming a Constitutional Review Committee. There is a notable tendency for the Government of Iraq to delay making difficult decisions. Political parties boycott CoR sessions where agendas include topics that they do not want discusses or voted on. There are still many outstanding issues, including legislation on the enactment of a High Independent Electoral Commission Law; Provincial Election Commission Law; Hydrocarbon Law; de-Ba’athification Reform Law; Flag, Emblem and National Anthem Law; and Amnesty, Militias, and other Armed Formations Law.  

The Department of Defense update characterized the political stalemate and proposed a timetable as follows:  

Personal loyalties to various sub-national groups, such as tribe, sect, or political party, are often stronger than loyalty to Iraq as a nation-state. In addition, Iraq’s political parties are often unwilling or unable to resolve conflicts through compromise. Further, some Iraqis have joined the political process but condone or maintain support for violent means as a source of political leverage. This makes effective national reconciliation and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs difficult to design and implement…  

A negotiated, realistic timetable for transition to security self-reliance could allow the government of Iraq to take responsibility for its political development, economy, and security, without threatening or unnecessarily risking the gains made so far. Such a timetable could lead to changes in the political dynamic in Iraq, providing support for the government’s own long-term vision: a united, federal, and democratic country, at peace with its neighbors and itself.  

The report also commended the formation of a Constitutional Review Committee in September, although the group had yet to meet.  

Efforts to develop coalitions had more mixed results. Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani did consider approving a US-backed coalition of two Kurdish groups, the Iraqi Islamic Party, and SCIRI to unite against violence and reduce the power of Sadr loyalists. Sistani had previously disapproved of any blocs that would divide the Shi’ite political parties. According to senior Shi’ite legislators, Ayatollah Sistani would accept the coalition only if it “preserved the unity” of the 130 member Shi’ite parliamentary bloc. Al-Sadr was unlikely to join a coalition that would limit his power, so the Shi’ite bloc would be preserved in name only.  

Ayatollah Sistani’s influence waned in 2006 as Sadr’s Mahdi Army took control of the streets, but he was still a very powerful figure in Iraq and Shi’ite legislators would not proceed with the coalition without his approval. Yet Sistani displayed growing disillusionment with politics,
telling visiting Shi’ite politicians that decisions were up to them. Those close to him said that the broad 130 member Shi’ite coalition had not united the way he wanted it to and that he was saddened by the deep divisions in the Shi’ite community and Iraq as a whole.\footnote{423}

Al-Maliki seemed tentative about joining such a coalition. A Shi’ite legislator close to Maliki said, “I think it’s a leap into the unknown. The negative things are clear, but no one can explain exactly what the positive things are.” Other politicians told the Prime Minister that if he joined, it would give him the political backing to break with Sadr. Al-Maliki, however, wanted to invite all parties into the bloc rather than limit membership.

The coalition clearly deepened splits in the internal Shi’ite community. The US embrace of al-Hakim and SCIRI in late 2006 in an attempt to marginalize al-Sadr could spell political suicide for al-Hakim, some Iraqis said. Many Shi’ites continued to oppose US “occupation” and if al-Hakim was seen to prop up the US image, he would lose crucial support. US support of the coalition also deepened rifts with al-Sadr and the Mahdi Army, which had growing control of the political and economic space.

In the early years of the war, al-Hakim attacked US policy, but he appeared to change his tactics at the end of 2006, sensing an opportunity for political power. Al-Sadr loyalists, on the contrary, continued to boycott Parliament and did not attend the National Reconciliation Conference. Sadr officials also circulated a petition in Parliament for a timetable for US withdrawal and received 131 signatures – almost half of Parliament.

A political analyst in Baghdad said that Prime Minister Maliki was concerned about the new tri-sectarian coalition and US support of al-Hakim. However, many Iraqis believed that al-Hakim jeopardized his credibility and power by meeting with President Bush and opposing al-Sadr and Maliki. Sadr gained significant Shi’ite support by opposing US forces and providing protection for Shi’ites in Baghdad.\footnote{424}

The plan to form the coalition came to a virtual halt when members of the Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party set new conditions for their participation. Saleem Abdullah said that the Islamic Party required that more Sunnis be installed in senior ministerial and security force positions. It was very unlikely that Shi’ite SCIRI would agree to the new conditions.\footnote{425}

Further, Sistani decided then that he would not support the coalition, saying that the unity of Shi’ites could not be disrupted. Sistani sought to reunite the broken 130 member United Iraqi Alliance, which was deeply divided over key issues such as federalism. His rebuke all but ended the possibility of the coalition proceeding.\footnote{426}

Other political developments had a more immediate effect. In late December al-Maliki announced plans for a ministerial shakeup. The key Defense and Interior Ministry posts would go unchanged, but health, transportation, culture, woman’s affairs, and tourism ministers would be replaced. Maliki’s critics said that the shake-up was symbolic only because it did not change key security posts. Dawa Legislator Abbas Bayati responded, “The security dilemma is not an issue of ministries. The issue is beyond the government and ministries. The real challenge is to find reconciliation and political understanding. It’s not possible to accuse the security ministries of poor performance.”

Many Sunnis welcomed the change of the health minister, held by Sadr’s bloc, which was widely accused of sectarianism, but Sadr had the responsibility of nominating a new minister. A member of the Dawa party admitted, “The service ministries are performing poorly, that’s obvious to
everyone. The Sadr bloc supervises many of the service ministries. The reshuffle is not targeted toward their bloc. It happens that the ministries they control are service ministries.” The new ministers were expected to take charge in early 2007.427

The New York Times reported on Iraqi politicians’ increasing control over security force activities. An Iraqi commander in Baghdad said that he frequently received phone calls from high ranking officials ordering him to release someone that Iraqi troops had captured engaging in some act of sectarian violence. In one instance, US and Iraqi troops found a bullet ridden car, sniper bullets, threatening notices to Shi’ites, and fake license plates. But when troops began to move in on the vehicle, the Iraqi commander received a call from the office of a top Sunni politician who owned the car and troops had to back off.

The US deputy commander for the Dagger Brigade Combat Team, First Infantry Division, said that he had “personally witnessed about a half-dozen of these incidents of what I would call political pressure, where a minister or someone from a minister’s office contacts one of these Iraqi commanders.” And he added that the pressure placed on Iraqi police forces was even greater. US commanders commiserated with the Iraqi commanders and understood that they had little choice if they got a call from a politician. These incidents of “political pressure” strengthened the argument that the solution in Iraq had to be political as well as military, but it also offered little hope that political progress could take place when sectarianism was so entrenched in the daily political process.428

Strains between the US and Iraqi governments increased at the diplomatic level. President Bush was expected to move the US Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, into the top position at the United Nations in the near future. Some members of the Shi’ite political community welcomed the change, saying that Khalilzad had been too sympathetic to Sunnis in 2006. An independent Kurdish legislator said, “Lately there has been a lot of criticism by the Shiites against Khalilzad, saying he is pro-Sunni. A new face with this new strategy, possible that would be more effective.”429

An exchange between the Iraqi government and the Sunni Association of Muslim Scholars on January 5 exemplified the tensions that hindered political progress and incited sectarian violence. The Association of Muslim Scholars issued a statement that said it had obtained information that militias were planning to attack neighborhoods in Baghdad and, “We also have come to know that some officials in this government know of this criminal scheme, which raises suspicions that they are collaborating with these militias.” “The Association of Muslim Scholars holds the current Iraqi government and the occupation forces responsible for any injustice against Iraqi people.”

Al-Maliki’s office responded, “What has been written in the statement of the Association of Muslim Scholars is absolutely incorrect and it could provoke sedition. We hold the association responsible for anything that could happen as a result of this.”430

On January 21 al-Sadr’s 30 deputies and 6 cabinet ministers returned to the government and he stood down his militia. Sadr clearly had more to gain from rejoining the government and letting US led forces go after rogue members of the Mahdi Army that did not answer to him. His choice in the context of the Bush strategy in Baghdad had the potential to preserve his personal influence in Iraq as well as his loyalists in the militia.
Al-Maliki also announced that he would not tolerate the sectarian actions of the Mahdi Army and that he would not protect al-Sadr. The government held some 430 Mahdi Army members in mid-January.\textsuperscript{431} The Prime Minister’s choice coupled with Sadr’s actions potentially revealed a shift in the Shi’ite strategy in Iraq at the start of the US surge. Al-Maliki’s break with Sadr would ensure economic and military support from the US while the stand down of the Mahdi Army would focus US military efforts against Sunni insurgents.

The return of Sadr’s bloc to Parliament brought attendance in assembly sessions to over 50% - the amount needed to pass laws – for the first time in several months, the \textit{New York Times} reported. Since November 2006, the Iraqi Parliament – with 275 elected members – only had the numbers necessary to pass laws a handful of times; on one occasion as few as 65 members made it to the session.

Members of Parliament said that security was one of the prime reasons for absenteeism – which was widespread across every party and sectarian group. Salaries paid for 20 security guards, but most lawmakers said that was not sufficient. But Iraqi officials said that some elected members were increasingly disillusioned with the Parliamentary process – which had not turned out like they thought it would. Many were also exhausted and frustrated and felt that regardless of how many sessions they attended, their voice did not resonate on Iraqi streets.

Those lawmakers who did not live outside the country – a group that included former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi – accomplished what that could in small, private meetings. Prime Minister Maliki repeatedly urged groups to attend Parliamentary sessions so that key laws could be passed, but the speaker – Mahmoud al-Mashhadani – wanted harsher repercussions for absenteeism.

For the first time in mid-January, al-Mashhadani read aloud the names of the absentees in an attempt to embarrass them. He also wanted to fine members $400 for every missed session and replace those who failed to attend a minimum number of times. The return of Sadr’s loyalists could keep the attendance level about 50% in the near future, allowing for votes to occur on key issues -- such as the oil law expected to reach full Parliament in February.\textsuperscript{432}

\textbf{US recommendations for Political Progress in Iraq}

While a variety of panels in the US contemplated changes in US strategy in Iraq, some senior politicians laid out several steps that \textit{Iraq} could take to alleviate the crisis. There appeared to be some consensus among policy makers in Washington in the fall of 2006 that regardless of American advice, the job of solving the crisis in Iraq was indeed an Iraqi problem. The Iraq Study Group Report stated, “The most important issues facing Iraq’s future are now the responsibility of Iraq’s elected leaders.”\textsuperscript{433} And the November Department of Defense Stability and Security update said, “Ultimately, success in these efforts lies with the Iraqi people.”\textsuperscript{434} Most US recommendations pointed to the need for political compromise between sectarian groups in Iraq, but it would be up to Iraqi politicians – who most certainly did not present a unified front even within sects - to figure out how to reach a consensus.

In his November 8 memo, national security advisor Stephen Hadley proposed several actions that al-Maliki could take to quell doubts about his capabilities.\textsuperscript{435} (The proposed actions that the US could take are outlined in the final section of this report).
• Compel his ministers to take small steps – such as providing health services and opening bank branches in Sunni neighborhoods – to demonstrate that his government serves all ethnic communities

• Bring his political strategy with Moqtada al-Sadr to closure and bring to justice any Jaish al-Madhi actors that do not eschew violence

• Shake up his cabinet by appointing nonsectarian, capable technocrats in key service and security ministries

• Announce an overhaul of his own personal staff so that it reflects the face of Iraq

• Demand that all government workers publicly renounce all violence for the pursuit of political goals as a condition for keeping their positions

• Declare that Iraqi will support the renewal of the UN mandate for multinational forces and will seek, as appropriate, to address bilateral issues with the US through a SOFA [status of forces agreement] to be negotiated of the next year

• Take one or more immediate steps to inject momentum into the reconciliation process such as a suspension of de-Baathification measures and the submission to the Parliament or Council of Representatives of a draft piece of legislation for a more judicial approach

• Announce plans to expand the Iraqi Army over the next nine months

• Declare the immediate suspension of suspect Iraqi police units and a robust program of embedding coalition forces in to MOI units while the MOI is revetted and retrained

In the time between Hadley’s writing of the memo and publication by the Times, al-Maliki did announce plans to reshuffle his cabinet, dismissed and charged members of the MOI suspected of sectarian acts, and called for the expansion of ISF by close to 20,000 troops. The UN mandate on Iraq was unanimously passed on November 27 for another year.

In an address to the Senate Armed Services Committee on November 15, David Satterfield, senior advisor to the Secretary of State and coordinator for Iraq, outlined several requirements for national reconciliation in Iraq to be successful.436

• Iraqi security forces, with coalition support, must achieve security conditions under which Iraqis can feel free to make the difficult choices necessary to pursue a national compact, a political reconciliation deal.

• The Iraqi government must reach out and engage all those willing to abandon violence and terror, including former members of the Ba’ath Party, while credibly threatening to combat those insurgents and terrorists who remain wholly opposed to a reconciled democratic Iraq.

• Iraqis must establish a robust process aimed at disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating members of armed groups into normal Iraqi society. And for this to be successful, such a DDR process has to acquire agreement on an amnesty plant that comprehensively gives militants incentives to return to civilian life.

• Iraqis must pursue and then must complete a new, modern, and comprehensive national hydrocarbon law, both to ensure that the country remains united, as well as to spur much-needed international investment. That can only come, will only come, when Iraq’s laws are fully established and clear to all.

The Iraq Study Group Report also established a projected timeline for the Iraqi government:437

By the end of 2006 – early 2007:

• Approval of the Provincial Election Law and setting an election date

• Approval of the Petroleum Law

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• Approval of the De-Baathification Law
• Approval of the Militia Law
• Iraqi increase of 2007 security spending over 2006 levels

By March 2007:
• A referendum on constitutional amendments (if it is necessary)

By April 2007:
• Iraqi control of the Army

By May 2007:
• Completion of Militia Law implementation
• Approval of amnesty agreement
• Completion of reconciliation efforts

By June 2007:
• Provincial elections

By September 2007:
• Iraqi control of provinces

By December 2007:
• Iraqi security self-reliance (with US support)

Prime Minister Maliki had previously eschewed milestones set by the US government so it appeared unlikely that he would accept the hasty timeline by the Iraq Study Group. Other key recommendations to Iraq were a constitutional review, reintegration of Ba’athists and Arab nationalists into national life, sharing oil revenue, holding provincial elections, and delaying a referendum on Kirkuk.438

The Pentagon’s Stability and Security Report for August-November also proposed a timetable:439

A negotiated, realistic timetable for transition to security self-reliance could allow the government of Iraq to take responsibility for its political development, economy, and security, without threatening or unnecessarily risking the gains made so far. Such a timetable could lead to changes in the political dynamic in Iraq, providing support for the government’s own long-term vision: a united, federal, and democratic country, at peace with its neighbors and itself.”

There was no lack of options on the table as 2006 came to a close, although none could provide a silver bullet answer to the crisis.

**Military Options and Political Failures**

The political failure to achieve conciliation forced changes in US and Iraqi government strategy. In his speech on the new US strategy in Iraq on January 10, President Bush stated that Prime Minister Maliki gave US and Iraqi forces the “green light” to enter all neighborhoods in Baghdad to end sectarian violence.440 Although the President did not mention Sadr City directly, this statement seemed to contradict al-Maliki’s strategy of pursuing a political solution with Moqtada
al-Sadr; US forces would clearly still meet substantial resistance in Mahdi Army controlled neighborhoods in Baghdad.

President Bush set forth the several specific benchmarks for the Iraqi government, which he had discussed with Prime Minister Maliki, although al-Maliki’s previous disavowal of US benchmarks drew into question to resolve of the Iraqi government to put them into action. 441

To establish its authority, the Iraqi government plans to take responsibility for security in all of Iraq’s provinces by November [2007]. The give every Iraqi citizen in the country’s economy, Iraq will pass legislation to share oil revenues among all Iraqis. To show that it is committed to delivering a better life, the Iraqi government will spend $10 billion of its own money on reconstruction and infrastructure projects that will create new jobs. To empower local leaders, Iraqis plan to hold provincial elections later this year. And to allow more Iraqis to re-enter their nation’s political life, the government will reform de-Ba’athification laws, and establish a fair process for considering amendments to Iraq’s constitution.

In a press conference the following day, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stressed the dangers in Iraq’s growing sectarian divisions:

I think as to -- I'd make one point about Baghdad and one point about the rest of the country. What has really happened in Baghdad -- and Prime Minister Maliki said this to the president -- is that the Iraqi people have lost confidence in the ability of their government to defend them in their capital, to protect them in their capital. And in fact, there are some, because of the sectarian overtones, who wonder if in fact their government is willing to protect them if they come from one sect or another. And I think what the Iraqi government is trying to do, and needs to do, is to reestablish civil order in the sense that they are, in fact, willing to and capable of protecting all Iraqis who live in Baghdad. That means the kinds of activities that take place in these neighborhoods wouldn't be tolerated, and they would, in fact, go after some of the violent people on either side who are causing the problems. And I think that will be a measure of how well they are doing.

In the provinces -- it's also important to recognize that not everything -- as important as Baghdad is, not everything rests on Baghdad. One reason that we're diversifying and decentralizing into the provinces and the localities is that you want to strengthen the governance from the bottom up as well. And we've learned that it is somewhat more effective to be able to deliver governance and economic development and reconstruction at a more local level. And I think it's starting to have an effect. We've seen it work in Mosul, we've seen it work in Tall Afar. And as the secretary said -- Bob said, in Anbar, we're beginning to get some signs that the tribal sheikhs there want to fight the violent extremists. And we've been in Anbar for a while now working politically.

Director of National Intelligence, John D. Negroponte, briefed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on January 11, 2007. Negroponte said that security in Iraq depended on the evolution of the following key issues:

- Foremost is the ability of the Iraqi government to establish and nurture effective national institutions that are based on national rather than religious or ethnic interests; and within this context, the willingness of the security forces to pursue extremist elements of all kind.
- The extent to which the Shia feel sufficiently secure in their political position: despite their recent electoral victories and overall political ascendancy, the Shia at present remain deeply insecure about their hold on power. This insecurity is manifested in the Shia’s refusal to make real concessions to the Sunnis on a range of issues, such as easing of de-Ba’athification and clamping down on radical Shia militias.
- The extent to which Arab Sunnis develop trust and participate in the new political order: now, many remain unwilling to accept their minority status, continue to resist violently this new political order, and distrust the Shia-led government and its commitment to their security.
• The extent to divisions within the Shia and the Sunni are addressed: profound intragroup divisions among the Shia and Sunnis complicate the situation, because no single leader can speak for or exert control over these groups.

• The extent to which extremists, most notably al-Qa’ida in Iraq (AQI), are suppressed: these groups continue to conduct high-profile, often mass casualty attacks that are effective accelerants for the self-sustaining inter-sectarian struggle between Shia and Sunnis.

• And lastly, the extent to which Iraq’s neighbors can be persuaded to stop the flow of militants and munitions across their borders: Iran’s lethal support for select groups of Iraqi Shia militants clearly exacerbates the conflict in Iraq, as does Syria’s continued provision of safehaven for expatriate Iraqi Ba’thists and less-than-adequate measures to stop the flow of foreign jihadists into Iraq.

Secretary of Defense Gates emphasized the linkage between US efforts and further Iraqi government actions:

I think that if we get some indication that the Iraqis are not fulfilling their commitments, the way this is going to unfold -- we are going to have a number of opportunities to go back to the Iraqis and point out where they have failed to meet their commitments and to move forward.

I think that, frankly, based on the president's conversations and the conversations that our ambassador and General Casey have had not just with the prime minister but with President Talabani and with other leaders in the Iraqi government that there is a broad commitment in the Iraqi government across several different groups in the government to make this work. So I think our assumption going forward is that they every intention of making this work, of fulfilling their commitments.

And, frankly, you know, the notion that the Iraqis are standing by while we're doing the fighting is really not an accurate statement. In fact, one of our military folks told me the other day that now more than half of the casualties coming into U.S. military hospitals in Iraq are Iraqi military. So they are fighting, and as we saw in the streets of Baghdad just in the last couple of days, they are fighting. So I think that -- our belief is they will fulfill these commitments. But if we see them falling short, we will make sure that they know that and how strongly we feel about it.

These changes in strategy had the potential to move political progress in a positive direction. Yet much depended on the Iraqi government’s ability to reach compromises among themselves, and subsequently, throughout the population. As sectarian tensions increased, more and more Iraqis looked to local leaders to control political space and it remained unclear if political leaders had enough power to end extreme sectarianism.

**Doubts Arise about Prime Minister Maliki and the Government**

Some US officials doubted whether Prime Minister Maliki had the “political will to weed out official corruption and tackle the brutal militias that were threatening to plunge Iraq into civil war.” US military officials stated that they wanted Mr. Maliki to take the lead in addressing the militia problem, but that if he did not address it soon, the US would need to step in and exert more pressure. It was unclear exactly what type of pressure that would be. The US military said that sectarian violence and the risk of civil war would not recede unless the Iraqi government tackled the militia problem.442

On November 30, President Bush and Prime Minister Maliki met in Jordan to discuss the deteriorating security situation in Iraq – although al-Maliki delayed the talks for a day. President Bush said that he would question al-Maliki about Iraq’s plan for dealing with the sectarian violence and about his “strategy to be a country which can govern itself and sustain itself.” The
administration had previously assured al-Maliki that they US fully backed his national reconciliation strategy, but it appeared that the US wanted to see expedient action from the Prime Minister in finding a political solution to the security crisis.443

Many Iraqis expected little outcome from the meeting between the two leaders, and they were not disappointed. Iraqis interviewed on the street were increasingly doubtful that the government of Prime Minister Maliki would be able to stall the progress of the civil war. A cab driver in Baghdad most likely expressed the sentiments of many struggling Iraqis when he said, “Nothing will happen, and we will get no results and no solutions. We need a strong state that can make decisions, that can beat the bad guys, can beat the militias. This meeting is just for the media, and it’s not useful.”444

As the two leaders met, the New York Times released a November 8 classified memo prepared for the President by National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley. The memo expressed doubts that Prime Minister Maliki would be able to “rise about the sectarian agendas being promoted by others.” Hadley stated that the opposition Maliki had shown the US and the coalition in the fall was perhaps an attempt by the Prime Minster to show his strength to Iraqis. The memo cited several principal concerns about the national reconciliation government that all pointed to consolidation of Shia power in Baghdad:445

- Reports of nondelivery of services to Sunni area
- Intervention by the prime minister’s office to stop military action against Shia targets and to encourage them against Sunni ones
- Removal of Iraq’s most effective leaders on a sectarian basis
- Efforts to ensure Shia majorities in all ministries
- Escalation of Jaish al-Mahdi killings

Hadley was also concerned that the information that al-Maliki received was incomplete because of “his small circle of Dawa advisers, coloring his actions and interpretation of reality… The reality on the streets of Baghdad suggests Maliki is either ignorant of what is going on, misrepresenting his intentions, or that his capabilities are not yet sufficient to turn his good intentions into action.”

The Washington Post summarized top US concerns about Maliki:446

US intelligence thinks Maliki is under enormous pressure and is therefore unpredictable. American military commanders think they can deal with him, but only with a lot of work and patience. State Department officials are uncertain about his prospects but content that it is time for Maliki to take control – and for the US to keep the Baghdad government at arms length… The shared fear, however, is that any new US strategy might shift greater control to Maliki and that then he might be unable or unwilling to take the tough steps needed. The US would be back to square one.

Despite public commitments to unity, Shi’ite leaders in government appeared increasingly to work to marginalize Sunnis and made few, if any, efforts to address Sunni concerns. Kurdish politicians distanced themselves from the Arab sectarian conflict, while working for the benefit of Kurdistan and supporting the peshmerga. Sunnis who still supported the political process – a number that was rapidly falling - became further marginalized and doubted the likelihood of their voice ever being heard in the Shi’ite controlled government. Further, Ministries were broken down by sectarian control, and it remained to be seen if the cabinet shakeup would have any effect.
Senior US administration officials told several news sources that they were increasingly concerned about al-Maliki’s intentions and his ability to lead Iraq forward. Their fears were exacerbated by the conduct of the Iraqi government surrounding Saddam Hussein’s sentencing and execution. On official said, “If that’s an indication of how Maliki is operating these days, we’ve got a deeper problem with the bigger effort.”

The Washington Post summarized US concerns about these trends and Maliki’s government as follows:

US intelligence thinks Maliki is under enormous pressure and is therefore unpredictable. American military commanders think they can deal with him, but only with a lot of work and patience. State Department officials are uncertain about his prospects but contend that it is time for Maliki to take control – and for the US to keep the Baghdad government at arms length… The shared fear, however, is that any new US strategy might shift greater control to Maliki and that then he might be unable or unwilling to take the tough steps needed. The US would be back to square one.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on January 11, 2007 – the day after President Bush announced the new US strategy – “We believe the Iraqi Government, which has not always performed, has every reason to understand the consequences of nonperformance. They, after all, came to us and said that this problem had to be solved.” When questioned by Senator Biden about Prime Minister Maliki’s resolve, Secretary Rice said, “I think he knows that his government is, in a sense, on borrowed time, not just in terms of the American people but in terms of the Iraqi people,” but she thought he would work towards holding up his side of the bargain.

Prime Minister Maliki expressed doubts of his own. He told the Wall Street Journal, “I didn't want to take this position. I only agreed because I thought it would serve the national interest, and I will not accept it again.” He added, “I wish I could be done with it even before the end of this term. I would like to serve my people from outside the circle of senior officials, maybe through the parliament, or through working directly with the people.” Maliki’s statement showed the effects of a trying first eight months in office and did not help create confidence in his government.

Saddam Hussein’s Sentencing

The trials of Saddam Hussein and his top followers became another source of sectarian political tensions. On November 5, an Iraqi court sentenced Saddam Hussein to death by execution for the killing of 148 Shi’ites in 1982 after an assassination attempt. Shi’ia were seen rejoicing in the streets the day of the conviction, but most Sunnis stayed inside, according the Washington Post. The global response, however, was mixed. President Bush and Iranian leaders commended the decision, but Europe and other Arab states questioned the sentence. European leaders spoke out against the death penalty, but did cite Hussein’s crimes against humanity.

Lawmakers in Jordan and Egypt stated that the entire trial was illegitimate, calling it “American engineered propaganda.” Magda Adli of the Nadeem Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence in Cairo added, “Everyone knows that the crimes and the genocides committed by the occupation during the past four years against Iraqis are equivalent to four times the crimes they claim were committed by Saddam.” Others warned that hanging Hussein would turn him into a martyr figure and exacerbate the civil conflict.
Saudi analysts also questioned the credibility of the trial. One analyst said, “the trial was politicized and the outcome known… We all know that Saddam’s guards are all Americans and the lawyers have been fired many times and the judges have been changed three times without any good reason. All these things prove that the judgment was biased.” He did not think that the outcome of the trial would affect violence in Iraq, however, because the fight was against the American occupation.\textsuperscript{453}

The UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers of the Human Rights Council stated his strong objections to the proceedings of the trial. The main objections were the following:\textsuperscript{454}

- The restricted personal jurisdiction of the tribunal, which enables it only to try Iraqis.
- Its limited temporal jurisdiction. The competence of the tribunal does include neither the war crimes committed by foreign troops during the first Gulf war (1990), nor the war crimes committed after 1 May 2003, date of the beginning of the occupation.
- Its doubtful legitimacy and credibility. The tribunal has been established during an occupation considered by many as illegal, is composed of judges who have been selected during this occupation, including non Iraqi citizens, and has been mainly financed by the United States.
- The fact that the Statute of 10 December 2003 contains advanced provisions of international criminal law which are to be applied in combination with an outdated Iraqi legislation, which allows the death penalty.
- The negative impact of the violence and the insecurity prevailing in the course of the trial and in the country. Since its beginning one of the judges, five candidate judges, three defence lawyers and an employee of the tribunal have been killed. Moreover, another employee of the tribunal has been seriously injured.
- Finally, and most importantly, the lack of observance of a legal framework that conforms to international human rights principles and standards, in particular the right to be tried by an independent and impartial tribunal which upholds the right to a defense.

For Prime Minister Maliki in Iraq, however, the verdict came as a welcome political boost. Celebrating Shi’ites said that trial and conviction brought legitimacy to al-Maliki’s government. Saddam’s sentence brought Maliki closer to his Shi’ite political base, but Sunnis only saw it as his tacit support of Shi’ite militias.\textsuperscript{455}

Baghdad, Mosul, Kirkuk, and Salahaddin and Diyala Provinces were under a two-day curfew as Hussein’s sentence was announced. Violence was minimal under the tight security, but even as the curfew ended, sectarian fighting continued only at its normal pace. It appeared that – for most Iraqis - the prospect of executing the former dictator came second to seeking revenge for more personal daily sectarian killings across Iraq. Hussein’s second trial for human rights abuses against the Kurdish population was still underway.

On December 30, 2006 Saddam Hussein was executed by hanging for crimes against humanity. The penalty came five days after an Iraqi appeals court upheld the November 5 decision. It was a unilateral Iraqi decision that received condemnation worldwide and within Iraq, in part because of the nature of the execution.

A New York Times report stated that Maliki had continually urged US military officials to hand over control of Hussein as quickly as possible. Ambassador Khalilzad said that there was no possible way of delaying the transfer to the Iraqis. Interviews with American officials following
the hanging found that the US had made significant efforts to delay the execution, but the final result was a “clash of cultures and political interests.”

A letter posted on the internet in the name of Hussein days before his execution called on Iraqis not to hate the people of the foreign countries that invaded Iraq, just their leaders. The letter also made an apparent reference to the help that’s some US attorneys gave him during the trial.

Hussein was put to death on the start of the Eid al-Adha holiday for Sunnis in spite of requests by American officials that the former leader not be executed on the holiday and that his two deputies be given 30 days to sign off on the sentence. Under the Iraqi Constitution, President Talabani – who opposed the death penalty – and the two deputies had to sign off on the execution, but a court rule prevented any change once a sentence was ratified by the appeals panel. Cell phone recordings later became public that showed security personnel taunting Hussein at the hanging shouting “Moqtada, Moqtada”.

Sunnis then demonstrated in protest against the execution and most agreed that it was a political mistake by the Shi’ite led government. Sunni demonstrators broke the locks on the golden shrine in Samarra that had been attacked last February and carried a mock casket. Neighborhoods in Baghdad also praised the Ba’ath Party and continued to pledge their support for Ba’athist fighters. Sunni al-Qa’ida in Iraq linked insurgents, however, did not react. Websites used by the militants did not issue any statements and there were no immediate retaliatory attacks.

The Iraqi government did launch an investigation into the jeering and misbehavior seen by Shi’ite security guards at Hussein’s hanging and arrested two guards suspected of circulating the cell phone video. But one Sunni educator said they had already “changed him from a criminal into a martyr.” The incident confirmed for Sunnis that there was little promise of reconciliation within the Shi’ite led government.

The US distanced itself from the execution and reiterated that it was unilateral Iraqi decision and that the US military played no part, except to airlift Hussein’s body for burial in his hometown of Tikrit. MNF-Iraq spokesman Maj. Gen. Caldwell did concede, “If you’re asking me, would we have done things different, yes, we would have. But that’s not our decision. That’s a government of Iraq decision.”

On January 15 Iraq also executed Barzan Ibrahim al-Tikriti, former head of Hussein’s secret police, and Awad Hamad al-Bandar, former chief judge of the revolutionary court. Under US pressure, the Maliki government took action to prevent the misdemeanors that occurred at Hussein’s execution. However, Ibrahim was decapitated during his hanging, leading to further cries of sectarianism of the Iraqi government.

A Rising Level of Conflict

Amid the growing sense that the country was in a civil war, the fledgling Iraqi government faced a renewed sense of urgency to contain sectarian violence, and exert authority over an increasingly factionalized Iraq. Iraqis were skeptical of the government’s ability to protect, and therefore turned to militias and neighborhood death squads for security. In Baghdad, militias held the real power in many Shi’ite strongholds while Sunni neighborhood gangs, “nationalist” insurgents, and al-Qa’ida in Iraq retaliated against Shi’ite militias. In October, deaths were averaging 100 a day in the capital as al-Maliki’s government failed to find a political solution to stop the killings. By all standards, Iraqi was in a civil war.
Sectarian and ethnic divisions expanded to become popular movements with a steadily broader base. While most Iraqis still expressed support for national unity in public opinion polls, the base for violence and cleansing expanded to include more and more of the population in areas where there was sectarian and ethnic tension and violence. This increase in tension was particularly common where militias and local security forces provided the only real security, young men had little employment, and the struggle for control of villages, cities, and neighborhoods became a struggle for housing, businesses, and the ability to conduct a normal life. The United Nations estimated that Iraqi civilian deaths averaged 94 a day in 2006. The Iraqi conflict might not have divided into easily definable sides or patterns of violence but it was clearly a civil war.

Army Gen. John Abizaid, chief of USCENTCOM, said, “I do believe that the secular tensions, if left unchecked, could be fatal to Iraq... and the center of the problem is Baghdad.” He added bluntly, “Given unlimited time and unlimited support, we’re winning the war.” The General voiced the concerns of US and Iraqi officials alike that if not addressed, sectarian tensions in Baghdad would escalate to full-scale civil war.463

The *Washington Post* reported in late September that growing numbers of sectarian and reprisal killings in Baghdad prompted Sunnis and Shi’a to adopt measures to hide their sectarian identities in various neighborhoods. Sunnis traveling through Shi’ite neighborhoods patrolled by the Mahdi army would pull out their fake Shi’ite ID cards, and Shi’a in Sunni neighborhoods also had their fake Sunni ID cards when they left.

One Sunni Muslim who was driving through Shaab, a Shi’ite neighborhood, feared for his life at a Mahdi army checkpoint. He watched as people in front of him were pulled out of their vehicle and some were pushed inside a nearby Shi’ite mosque. As he neared the checkpoint, he put in a tape of Shi’ite religious songs, wrapped a piece of green cloth from the Imam Ali shrine in Najaf around his gearshift, and hung a picture of Imam Ali, the most revered Shi’ite saint, on his rearview mirror. His fake ID card said he was Shi’ite and changed his tribal name from al-Obeidi to al-Hussein. His measures saved him and his family from imminent danger.

Another Sunni started carrying a fake ID card after his aunt was abducted and killed at a Shi’ite checkpoint. He said that now whenever he drives into a Shi’ite neighborhood he slips on a ring worn by many Shi’a and carries a torba, a piece of clay Shi’ites used while praying. He also memorized the 12 Shi’ite imams in order because he heard militias often use that as a test at their checkpoints. He said, “I don’t like to learn something that happened more than a thousand years ago, but I have to.” One Sunni website even offered twelve steps that Sunnis should take to change their identities at checkpoints. The first was to get a Shi’ite ID card that changes your name to a Shi’ite tribe.

A Sunni living in a mostly Shi’ite neighborhood was forced to change his identity not only while driving his car, but in his house as well. He displayed photos of Moqtada al Sadr and Imam Ali around his home. His cell phone chanted Shi’ite religious songs and his neighbors all believed he was Shi’ite. One of his Shi’ite friends brought over a video of a Mahdi army operation. In response, he said, “God help us get rid of the Salafis and Wahhabis.” The disguises saved Mr. Khalaf and many other moderate Sunnis across Baghdad, but the daily ritual of lying and living in fear was beginning to take a toll on average Iraqis.464

Despite the evidence, Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi said in mid October, “There is bloodshed and sectarian tensions and innocent people are being killed but we are not in a civil war.”465
Iraqis on the streets in Baghdad, however, saw the government’s denial as another form of its ineffectiveness. The kidnappings, disappearances, intimidations, reprisal killings, and forced relocations all pointed to civil war.

In classified reports and discussions, however, the US military labeled Iraq as edging toward “chaos.” USCENTCOM’s “Index of Civil Conflict” tracked the transition from “peace” toward “chaos” in 2006. The Index showed that since the Samarra mosque bombing in February, Iraq had moved closer to civil conflict. CENTCOM released a one-page slide that showed the spectrum and the indicators that caused the “critical” situation. Each indicator was given a degree of concern. The main “key reads” included:

- Political/religious leaders increase public hostile rhetoric (routine)
- Political/religious leaders lose moderating influence over public (significant)
- Provoking sectarian attacks/assassinations (irregular)
- Unorganized mass spontaneous civil conflict (routine)

Additional Indicators included:
- Militias expand security role (significant)
- Governance (significant)
- Police ineffectual (significant)
- Army ineffectual (irregular)
- Neighbors enable violence (irregular)
- Sectarian tensions/violence displace population (significant)
- Sectarian conflict between/within ISF (irregular)
- ISF refuse to take orders from central government, mass desertion (irregular)
- Kurds accelerate moves towards succession, annexing Kirkuk (irregular)
- Low level violence motivated by sectarian differences (critical)

The Pentagon’s August-November Stability and Security in Iraq report summarized the security environment:

- Baghdad remained the focus of much of Iraq’s violence, but it was also significant in Diyala and Anbar provinces and in the cities of Kirkuk, Mosul, Basra, Amara, and Balad."

- The Violence in Anbar was almost completely initiated by Sunni extremists and directed at Coalition forces. However, there were attempts by al-Qaeda in Iraq and affiliated Sunni extremists to intimidate the local population. These efforts provoked a backlash. Some tribal chiefs and Sunni Rejectionist leaders began localized efforts to retake control of their areas.

- In Diyala, and recently in Balad, in conflict between al-Qaeda in Iraq and Jaysh al-Mahdi was a sectarian fight for power and influence. In Diyala, sectarian violence decreased in September, largely due to a successful series of Iraq Army/Coalition forces operations, which significantly degraded al-Qaeda in Iraq activity. However, in October, the number of casualties rose, as al-Qaeda in Iraq resumed sectarian attacks.

- The conflict in Basra, Amara, and the south was characterized by tribal rivalry, increasing intra-shi’a competition, and attacks on Coalition forces operating in the region.
In the fall and early winter of 2006, Baghdad remained the center of the violence. Sectarian militias fought to gain strongholds in the neighborhoods surrounding the green zone, which could virtually be mapped out according to the militia or neighborhood gang residents supported. The Mahdi Army had almost complete control of the eastern portion, but through low level ethnic cleansing by rogue Mahdi Army cells, the militia was gaining a foothold in the western neighborhoods. Sunnis relied increasingly on militias and neighborhood gangs for protection to seek revenge. Bodies appeared daily on the streets and several large scale bombings by Sunni insurgents against Shi’ites prompted reprisal attacks.

Operation Together Forward II had all but failed to secure Baghdad. The areas in which violence fell did so because militias forced sectarian relocation. By the end of 2006, there were few mixed neighborhoods left in Baghdad. Insurgents and militias resorted to mortar attacks across neighborhoods or suicide bombing in large marketplaces. Baghdad appeared to be close to the point of no return as US military offensives could do little against nightly revenge killings and suicide bombers in a city of 6 million.

The DoD’s November assessment said of the capital, “The level of sectarian violence has risen, with much of it directed against civilians. Neighborhoods have responded by forming their own militias for self defense.”

Another snapshot of the spreading civil conflict occurred in ethnically mixed Diyala Province, just north of Baghdad. Membership in the Mahdi Army reached 6,000 to 8,000 in Diyala, but Shi’a civilians had for the most part been driven out of Baquba, the volatile provincial capital, but the Mahdi Army secured a Shi’a safe haven in Muqdadiya and Kham Bani Saad, just 12 miles south of Baquba. From those cities, militiamen could attack Sunnis in Baquba, who in turn relied on Sunni insurgent groups for protection.

A US commander in Diyala said of the situation, “We are really painting [Sunnis] into a box here. If you want to have a fight for the next 20 years, it’s here. I can’t imagine anybody who has seen war who wants that to happen. It’s the innocents, it’s there farmers out here, it’s the kids who pay the price. But these interests are colliding and they don’t care about that. Power is what they’re after, consolidated and uncontested political power.”

In the last week of November police found dozens of bodies on the streets of Baquba and Iraqi troops found a mass grave with 28 bodies just south of the city. Fighting between Iraqi security forces and Sunni insurgents erupted, leaving more than 50 dead and dozens wounded. Suspected insurgents also attacked the overwhelmingly Shi’ite police headquarters in the city. The schools remained closed in the fall of 2006 and the streets were empty, even in daylight. Residents had little electricity and clean water as the security situation prevented planned reconstruction efforts.

However, Col. David W. Sutherland, commander of US and coalition forces in Diyala Province, denied that Baquba has shutdown due the security situation. He said the week’s events were a “setback experience by the Iraqi police,” but that the city was “fully operational.” He said that the government center was open and most employees had turned up for work. He did concede, “Insurgent and terrorist organizations are attempting to destabilize the security forces, the government and the population through violence and misinformation. However, the government and the security forces are in control.” Baquba remained under a curfew for over a week.
In Baghdad and areas to the north and south, US and Iraqi sources characterized militias as the largest threat to stability. In an address to the Senate Armed Services Committee on November 15, David Satterfield, State Department Coordinator for Iraq, stated, “Sustained sectarian violence the associated rise in armed militias, and other extragovernmental groups are now the greatest threat to a stable, unified, and prosperous Iraq.”

The September – October UN Assistance Mission to Iraq Human Rights report echoed Mr. Satterfield’s assessment. The report said:

Much of the violence is carried out by militias and other armed gangs, some purportedly to grant the community protection that cannot be guaranteed by the state law enforcement agencies. Militias and other armed groups are said to be in control of whole areas in the east and west of Baghdad and continue to carry out illegal policing, manning of checkpoints and “dispensation of justice” through illegal trials and extra-judicial executions. They operate with almost total impunity… Many victims are kidnapped by militias at improvised checkpoints and then extra-judicially executed. These tactics have been employed by both Sunni and Shi’ite armed groups or militias to various degrees.

The *Iraq Study Group Report* said, “Militias are currently seen as legitimate vehicles of political action… Sunni insurgents will not lay down arms unless the Shia militias are disarmed. Shia militias will not disarm until the Sunni insurgency is destroyed. To put is simply: there are many armed groups within Iraq, and very little will to lay down army.”

The bleak assessment by the panel gave little hope that the level of violence would decrease anytime soon. The Report stated that four of the eighteen provinces were “highly insecure” – Baghdad, Anbar, Diyala, and Salladdin. Those four provinces accounted for about 40% of the population.

A Crisis Group report in late December also described the conflict as follows:

Notwithstanding repeated US proclamations of yet another turning point or milestone, the unremitting and sustained level of violence has amply demonstrated that it has become self-sustained, immune to episodic military achievements by American forces or to apparent political advances by the Iraqis themselves. Clearly, the violence was triggered, and is now both fuelled and contained by the US military presence. But by now the conflict has developed its own, intrinsic dynamic, together with the means to reproduce and perpetuate itself.

The self-reinforcing cycle of violence has several explanations. The armed groups’ and militias’ most important source of legitimacy and power has become the conflict’s very radicalization: the more they can point to the extreme violence of the other, the more they can justify their own in terms of protection (of one’s community) and revenge (against another). In the absence of a state apparatus capable of safeguarding the population, civilians are caught in a vicious cycle in which they must rely on armed groups. The more the situation deteriorates, the easier it is for these groups to command loyalty and mobilize their political and social constituency: fear of the “other” has, in essence, become their most valuable asset. The stronger the Sunni radicals become, the strong become the Shiite radicals. And vice versa.

Since 2006 in particular, the armed opposition has focused its propaganda on crimes committed against Sunni Arabs, thereby encouraging a siege mentality and promoting its own role as protector of the oppressed population. Shiite militias similarly legitimate their actions by highlighting both the state’s deficiency and their resulting responsibility to protect civilians. In short, violence spawns the symbolic resources that its perpetrators need.

This dynamic is clearly manifested in the groups’ behavior. At one level, all sides claim to be targeting narrowly defined, fanatical and brutal enemies who can only be dealt with violently. For the most part, none of the Sunni insurgent groups – not even the jihadists – publicly claims responsibility for attacks against Shiite civilians.
Broad struggles existed in most of the country with mixed populations for control or dominance by Shi’ite, Sunni, and Kurdish factions, often driving out smaller minorities or suppressing them. These struggles were difficult to map or quantify, but affected virtually every governorate. Kurd-Arab struggles were particularly important in the north near Kirkuk, the northern oil fields, to the east of Mosul, and in areas with a Turcoman population. Sectarian cleansing continued to be a major problem in the Basra areas and in many towns and villages, and rural areas throughout the country with mixed Sunni and Shi’ite populations.

Baghdad remained the most visible center of the violence. Sectarian militias fought to gain strongholds in the neighborhoods surrounding the green zone, which could virtually be mapped out according to the militia or neighborhood gang residents supported. The Mahdi Army had almost complete control of the eastern portion of the city, but through soft ethnic cleansing by militias, Shi’ite extremists gained a foothold in the western neighborhoods. Sunnis relied increasingly on insurgent groups and neighborhood gangs for protection and to seek revenge.

The Defense Department’s November assessment said of the capital, “The level of sectarian violence has risen, with much of it directed against civilians. Neighborhoods have responded by forming their own militias for self defense.”

The November – December Human Rights Report by the United Nations also said:

Baghdad is at the center of the sectarian violence. Sunni and Shiite armed groups are attempting to establish territorial control of Baghdad’s many predominantly mixed neighborhoods by intimidating and killing civilian populations and forcing them into displacements to parts of the city inhabited or controlled by members of their ethnic group. Reports suggest the existence of large movements of populations primarily within the city boundaries, as the neighborhoods become increasingly divided among Sunni and Shi’a armed groups, and are consequently grouped together based on their sect and ethnicity. This forces displacement has been achieved by means of large scale attacks targeting civilians, kidnappings, extra-judicial killings, dropping of leaflets, destruction of property, and intimidation. For instance, fighting between Sunni and Shiite armed groups were primarily recorded in December in Baghdad’s neighborhoods of Dora, Hurriyah, Al Adhamiya, Khadimiyah, Ghazaliyah, Amariya and Qadisiyah.

Although large scale attacks and extra judicial killings caused grave loss of life, the Report noted that intimidation campaigns, kidnappings, and destruction of property equally contributed to the polarization of sects into controlled areas. The key issue at stake was not only territorial control, but also control of political and economic space. In order for the armed sectarian groups to sustain their movements, they needed to gain the support of the population.

Two large scale attacks took place in the capital during the reporting period: on January 16 a car bomb exploded near al-Mustansiriya University in eastern Baghdad, killing 60 people and wounding 140, the majority of whom were students; and on January 22 multiple bombs in a central market killed 88 and wounded at least 160.

The level of violence in Kirkuk also escalated:

On January 17 in Kirkuk a suicide truck bomber blew himself up near a police headquarters in Kirkuk, northern Iraq, killing 10 people and wounding 42 others. On January 16, a police colonel survived a roadside bomb that exploded near his car, killing one civilian and wounding four, including two policemen. On January 15 two people were killed and five wounded when a car bomb exploded near the Turkman Front Party and a Katyusha rocket landed in a house wounding two people. On January 13, 2007 gunmen planted explosives at a Shi’ite mosque under construction. The mosque was 65% completed, but the explosion destroyed it. On the same day, gunmen killed two contractors working on a main highway. Mortar rounds also hit a neighborhood, wounding three people. On January 5 a roadside bomb targeting a police patrol wounded two policemen, including a major who was in serious condition. These attacks

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anticipated the sectarian violence that would occur if a referendum took place in November of 2007. It was clear that northern Iraq was not immune from the sectarian violence centered in Baghdad.

The November – December UN Human Rights report said of Kirkuk: \(^{480}\)

Human rights violations are reportedly committed by security forces at detention centers. In many cases the arrest and detention of people is carried out by Kurdish militias. Detainees are often transferred directly to the Kurdistan Region without notifying the governorate or the police. Officials in Kirkuk are aware of such practices, yet no significant effort has been made to stop them. Even though violent is not on the same level as in Baghdad, on-going human rights violations and the surge of violent acts which have significantly increased since 2003 are widely believed to be the doing of perpetrators and instigators from inside and outside Iraq and Kirkuk. Lately, due to the continuing insecurity, ethnic groups have moved closer to their own communities for protection.

The lack of adequate protection by government security forces in Kirkuk forced residents to turn to the armed groups from their respective sects for security.

The number of attacks in Iraq became increasingly less important as the insurgency transformed into a civil conflict. What was important was the growing control of local populations by sectarian armed groups. Nationalists were either eliminated or coerced into taking a side in the sectarian struggle. Ethnic groups built up local security structures – often in the absence of adequate government security forces – to gain the trust and political backing of members of their respective sects.

Meanwhile, these armed groups used threats, physical intimidation, blackmail, seizure of property, raids on homes and businesses, use of checkpoints to push other factions out, kidnappings and extortion, misuse of government offices and police, and disappearances to wage a campaign of soft ethnic cleansing against others. Maps of Baghdad and other major cities with mixed populations showed a steady separation of the population on sectarian and ethnic lines, and reflected the efforts of the dominant side to push the other out or exclude it.

This soft sectarian cleansing had all but eliminated nationalist voices at the beginning of 2007, although publicly the Iraqi government and security forces voiced their commitment to unity. The reality was that increasingly the Iraqi population – the people who would control the outcome of the conflict – tied themselves to a variety of locally armed groups who all fought for control of political and economic space.

Corruption and the local and national levels and widespread unemployment in ethnically mixed violent cities led many young men to join sectarian groups simply with the hope of bringing life back to normal.

**Defining the Conflict**

The conflict in Iraq became steadily more complex and harder to define. The slow and steady push toward widespread civil conflict in 2004 and 2006 quickened in 2006 as it became more visible and public. The level of control of the population by a large number of diverse sectarian groups was difficult to gage using readily available sources, but it was clearly growing. The conflict was a civil war by every definition, but the issue at the start of 2007 was whether any security or political offensive by the US or Iraq could reduce the control that sectarian groups possessed over the Iraqi population.

On November 20, 2006 Iraqi Defense Minister Abdel Qader Jassim said, “We are in a state of war and in war all measure are permissible,” according to Reuters. He made the remarks several
days after the fate of dozens of employees kidnapped from the Ministry of Higher Education was still unknown. The statement was one of the first acknowledgements by a cabinet member of the scale of the violence engulfing Iraq. It underscored the divisions between members of al-Maliki’s government and made hopes of finding a political solution the crisis nearly impossible.

A senior member of Iraq’s government told the Washington Post, “[Iraq] is worse than a civil war. In a civil war, you at least know which factions are fighting each other. We don’t even know that anymore. It’s so bloody confused.” Some world leaders, however, still hesitated to call Iraq a civil war, but most agreed that it was at the brink and urgent action was needed.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said in late November, “Given the developments on the ground, unless something is done drastically and urgently to arrest the deteriorating situation we could be there. In fact, we are almost there.” Two weeks later, Annan revised his assessment and said, “When we had the strife in Lebanon and other places we called that a civil war; this is much worse.” Prime Minister Maliki rebuked Annan’s characterization of the stability of Iraq and accused the Secretary General of “burnishing the image” of Saddam Hussein.

In November several prominent US media agencies officially made public their use of “civil war” in describing the conflict. Even so, General Caldwell agreed with the President that sectarian violence was escalating, but the government had not fallen and was still effective so the country could not be described as being in a civil war. US National Security spokesman Gordon Johndroe said, “While the situation on the ground is very serious, neither Prime Minister Maliki nor we believe that Iraq is in a civil war.”

Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger said when asked if a ‘military victory’ could be achieved in Iraq, “If you mean by ‘military victory’ an Iraqi government that can be established and whose write runs across the whole country, that gets the civil war under control and sectarian violence under control in a time period that the political processes of the democracies will support, I don’t believe that is possible.” Colin Powell also said in a statement that contrasted with the President’s viewpoint, “Iraq could be considered a civil war.” And National Intelligence Director John Negroponte said that in many ways the situation in Iraq was more complex and more dangerous than the conflict in Vietnam.

Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, leader of SCIRI, told President Bush in a meeting in Washington on December 4 that the only way to avoid full-scale civil war was “decisive strikes” against Sunni insurgents. Al-Hakim expressed concern that Shi’ite leaders were losing their ability to control the violence. He called clerics the “last fortress” against civil war, according to a Washington Post article. Hakim had received widespread criticism the previous week when he commented that if full-scale civil war broke out, Sunnis would be the “biggest losers.”

Despite building consensus in the US that Iraq was in a low level civil war, Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi said that there was no way Iraq would erupt into a full scale civil war – unless wives started killing husbands and vice versa. He stated that the levels of violence – although bad – did not take into account the fact that Sunnis and Shi’ites had intermarried and that in the past, there had not been a problem between the two sects. According to US Gen. Caldwell, 4 million of 27 million Iraqis had mixed marriages in the fall of 2006.

The Pentagon’s August-November Stability and Security in Iraq Report defined the conflict in the following way:
The conflict in Iraq has been characterized by a struggle between Sunni and Shi’a armed groups fighting for religious, political, and economic influence, set against a backdrop of a Sunni insurgency and terrorist campaigns directed against the majority Shi’a Government of Iraq and the Coalition forces that are supporting it. The competition among factions has manifested itself in ethno-sectarian violence, conflicting national and provincial politics, suspension about the work of government ministries, pressures in ISF operations, and criminal activities. In contested areas, such as Baghdad, Diyala, and Kirkuk, extremists on all sides have sought to undermine the religious and ethnic tolerance of the Iraqi people in order to gain control of territory and resources.

The report fell short of describing the conflict as civil was, but it was a far more realistic assessment by the DoD than in past reports.495

At the present time, sustained ethno-sectarian violence is the greatest threat to security and stability in Iraq. Competition between sects and ethnic political groups for economic and political power has become a dominant feature in the political landscape. Such violence is tragic and tends to undermine the rule of law and discredit the elected government. However, the situation in Iraq is far more complex than the term “civil war” implies; attempts to define the several and diverse sources of violence as civil war are not helpful to Iraqi efforts to arrive at political accommodations.

However, conditions that could lead to civil war do exist, especially in and around Baghdad, and concern regarding civil war runs high among the Iraqi populace. Within the four provinces where the overwhelming majority of attacks occur (Anbar, Baghdad, Salah ad Din, and Diyala), violence remains localized to mixed neighborhoods. The Iraqi institutions of the center are holding, and members of the current government have not openly abandoned the political process. Decisive leadership by the Government of Iraq, supported by the United States and its Coalition partners, could mitigate further movement toward civil war and curb sectarian violence. Iraqi leaders must take advantage of the popular support for a unified Iraq and the opposition to violence to form institutions that take responsibility for Iraq’s security.

A poll included in the DoD report found that Iraqis in most provinces were more concerned about the outbreak of full scale civil war in October 2006 than they were at the same time in 2005. Figure II.10 shows that Iraqis in Ninawa, Tamim, Salahaddin, Diyala, and Baghdad Provinces were the most concerned about civil war. The largest increases in percent answering “very” or “somewhat” concerned over civil war were in the northern Dahuk and Sulaymaniyah Provinces.

Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan joined the international community in saying that Iraq was in civil war; “Muslims kill each other just because they belong to different sects. This is a civil war because I cannot make another definition.”496

It was equally clear in the winter of 2006-2007 that the sectarian violence was spreading from Baghdad into surrounding provinces. The expansive urban area around the capital was just as ethnically diverse and residents in Baquba, Samarra, and elsewhere became wrapped up in the cycle of revenge killings. Young men in ethnically diverse areas found themselves surrounded by violence, with little opportunity to find jobs or support themselves, leading many to join a variety of armed groups for survival and protection.
Figure II.10: How Concerned Are You that Civil War may Break out in Iraq? Breakdown of Provinces, November 2005 and October 2006

Percent Answering “very” or “somewhat” concerned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Iraqi Province</th>
<th>November 2005</th>
<th>October 2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ninawa</td>
<td>75%-100%</td>
<td>75%-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahuk</td>
<td>0%-25%</td>
<td>50%-75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arbil</td>
<td>0%-25%</td>
<td>50%-75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamim</td>
<td>50%-75%</td>
<td>75%-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulaymaniyah</td>
<td>0%-25%</td>
<td>50%-75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salah ad Din</td>
<td>50%-75%</td>
<td>75%-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diyala</td>
<td>50%-75%</td>
<td>75%-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>50%-75%</td>
<td>75%-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karbala</td>
<td>25%-50%</td>
<td>25%-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babil</td>
<td>25%-50%</td>
<td>25%-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasit</td>
<td>25%-50%</td>
<td>25%-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Najaf</td>
<td>25%-50%</td>
<td>25%-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muthanna</td>
<td>0%-25%</td>
<td>25%-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qadisiyah</td>
<td>25%-50%</td>
<td>25%-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhi Qar</td>
<td>0%-25%</td>
<td>25%-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maysan</td>
<td>0%-25%</td>
<td>25%-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basra</td>
<td>0%-25%</td>
<td>25%-75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

High Profile Abductions

On November 14, 2006 the largest mass kidnapping occurred since the US led invasion in 2003. Between 100 and 150 employees and visitors at the Sunni controlled Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Scholarships and Cultural Relations Directorate in the downtown Karradah district of Baghdad were kidnapped by about 80 gunmen. The Ministry was responsible for granting scholarships to professors and students wishing to study abroad. Witnesses said that the gunmen were dressed in police uniforms and cordoned off the street before they passed by four guards. The operation only took 15 minutes and the kidnappers locked the women into one room in the building and then separated out the males into Sunni and Shi’ites. But the Higher Education Minister said that both Sunnis and Shi’ites were kidnapped. He also announced that classes at Universities would be suspended until further notice to protect professors and students.497

Government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh did acknowledge that the mass abduction was the work of militiamen who had infiltrated the interior ministry and were carrying out "organized" killings. Fourteen of the abductees were released unharmed the same day, but at least 40 were still held. The Interior Ministry announced that five police chiefs were being held for questioning in the incident. Previous sectarian violence had pointed to the infiltration of the MOI by Shi’ite militias, but the Higher Education kidnapping proved the validity of Sunni accusations so strongly that it even surprised most Iraqis. Iraq’s leading Sunni clerics' organization, the Muslim Scholars' Association, said in a statement, “This cowardly act confirms what we have always warned and we blame the government and the interior ministry for this crime.”498

A report the following day said that an Iraqi police raid during the night had freed the majority of the captives and that only two were still held. Al-Maliki also spoke at Baghdad University to calm students and professors and urge them to continue their studies in Iraq. He said, “The country is full of such gangs and militias but this will not drive us back from chasing them. Those who carried out the act are worse than takfiris (extremists) because they kidnapped intellectuals and prevented universities from executing their role.” Maliki also told state news al-Iraqiya that the abductions were a result of a “conflict between militias.”499

A spokesman for Abed Dhiab al-Ujaili, the minister of higher education, disagreed with the government spokesman, saying that nearly 100 captives were still being held. The two spokesmen dismissed the other’s comments and false and misleading. Al-Ujaili, a Sunni, also announced that he was stepping down from his cabinet position until all the captives were rescued. He accused al-Maliki’s administration of politicizing the kidnapping and that it was “unacceptable behavior.”500 He also said that most of the hostages had been tortured and some killed. Al-Ujaili added, “I feel there is no effective government.”501 The disagreement underscored the inability of Sunnis and Shi’ites within the government to find any common ground, even when it came to simple numbers.

On November 17 another high profile abduction took place, this time in the southern Dhi Qar Province. Five civilian contractors working for the Kuwaiti based security firm Crescent Group were kidnapped from their vehicles at what appeared to be a police checkpoint. The convoy of 43 trucks supported by 6 security vehicles was stopped at Safwan. 19 trucks and one security vehicle were hijacked and 14 people were initially captured. Nine drivers from India, Pakistan,
and the Philippines were released while four Americans and one Austrian were taken to an unknown location, according to the Washington Post. The private security firm, the Crescent Group, provided protection to convoys traveling in and out of Iraq.  

USA Today reported that according to Iraqi police, the Austrian contractor was found dead and one of the Americans was seriously wounded; the other three Americans were still missing. British forces found them while searching a farm area around Safwan. A British military spokesman said that about ten gunmen had opened fired on the British forces, leading them to the bodies. Coalition forces continued to search for the three missing Americans. British and Italian troops had handed over security control of Dhi Qar to Iraq in September and the abduction was the first serious insurgent attack in several months. As of early December the fate of the contractors was still unknown.

On December 17, some 30 members of the Iraqi Red Crescent Group in Baghdad were kidnapped. The following day, 17 were released, but many were still held in an unknown location. It was one of the first attacks against aid workers in some time. The group said that their office had a variety of sects represented.

Reprisal Attacks

Reprisal killings, mostly in the form of assassinations or kidnappings followed by execution style deaths, were the primary cause of death to Iraqis in the fall of 2006. By October, around 100 Iraqis were killed daily by various forms of violence, according to the Iraqi government. One of the worst sequences of reprisal killings occurred in mid October.

On October 12, 17 Shi’ite farm workers from Balad were kidnapped and later executed in retaliation for the burning of three Sunnis the previous day. The workers had been hired to prune date trees in the neighboring Sunni town of Duluiyah. Two days later, Shi’ite militiamen retaliated for the kidnapping by attacking Duluiyah and the Sunni minority in Balad.

Shi’ite elders in Balad said that they had called on the Badr Brigade and Mahdi Army from Baghdad to retaliate. After several hours of street battles, there were at least 80 dead between the two towns, but most were Sunnis. Residents from Balad and Duluiyah said that civilians had taken up arms against each other, and Sunni and Shi’ite mosques in the respective towns called on people to defend their neighborhoods.

By the following day, the Sunni minority in Balad – where Shi’ite militiamen dressed in black patrolled the streets - had fled to Duluiyah. Sunni families said that Shi’ite militiamen were going door to door telling them that they had two hours to leave or they would be killed. A representative from the Iraqi Islamic Party said that 60 Sunni families were forced to flee Balad. A Sunni farmer in Duluiyah said, “This has pushed us to the point that we must stop this sectarian government.” Residents in Balad also reported that 13 carloads of Shi’ites had been kidnapped in the third day of the fighting and had not returned.

Four days later, ISF were still deploying forces to deal with the aftermath of the violence. The US military had arrested two Iraqi police officers suspected of killing the Shi’ite farm workers. Local Sunni police in Duluiyah, however, accused the ISF of working with Shi’ite militias during the fighting. A police officer said the violence between civilians in the cities was
particularly vicious, even by Iraqi standards. He also said that the complete and sustained control of militias, which had traveled from Baghdad, within hours, was unusual.514

The Sunni population in Balad was almost utterly displaced; only 6 Sunni families remained a week after the fighting broke out. Shi’ite militias patrolled the highway, but Sunni insurgents congregated outside the town limits, looking for a chance to retaliate. The Shi’ite residents, however, voiced anger over the Mahdi Army’s presence in their streets and said that it was the ethnically diverse Iraqi army that eventually quelled the violence.515

The sectarian fighting between the two towns was a prime example of the civil war endangering the future of Iraq. A government reconciliation dialogue conference had been scheduled for October 14, the day the violence broke out. However, the conference was postponed because sectarian tempers would be too heated for civil discussion.516 Yet with killings at 100 a day, it was unclear when lawmakers would be able to reach any compromise.

Tit-for-tat reprisal killings continued in November. Iraqi officials in Baghdad said that in the first week of November, the Adhamiya and Grayat neighborhoods along the Tigris exchanged mortar fire. At least seven Sunnis were killed in Adhamiya when mortar rounds from Grayat landed in a market. Three hours later, a suicide bomb detonated his explosives belt in a crowded café in Grayat, killing 17 and injuring 21. Although the two neighborhoods were adjacent, Sunni and Shi’ite victims had to travel extra distances to their respective sectarian controlled hospitals.517

The attacks continued the following day when seven mortars fell on Adhamiya, killing three and wounding fifteen.518

The September – October UN Assistance Mission to Iraq Human Rights report said of reprisal attacks during the reporting period:519

The purpose of targeted attacks has mainly been to eliminate prominent members of a community, seek reprisal for the death of a family or sect member, often sparking sectarian violence, thus perpetuating the vicious cycle of revenge killings… Frequent revenge attacks are recorded against police stations and recruitment centers either in retaliations for the kidnappings and murders attributed to the militias or designed to intimidate individuals and institutions from collaborating with MNF-I or the Government.

On November 24 the deadliest sectarian attack in Iraq since the US led invasion in 2003 prompted another series of revenge attacks. Five carbombs exploded in Sadr City marketplaces mid-afternoon, killing more than 200 and wounding 250. The bombings were coordinated with Sunni insurgent attacks on the Shi’ite-run Health Ministry, in apparent revenge for the large-scale abduction at the Sunni-run Ministry of Higher Education the previous week.

In response to the bombings, Shi’ite militiamen from Sadr City fired mortars into the Sunni Adhamiya neighborhood, wounding ten. A representative for al-Sadr said, “We blame the government for the attacks. We have no trust in the government or in the Americans.” The New York Times reported that Mahdi Army militiamen flooded the streets and vowed revenge against Sunnis and coalition forces.520

The following day, Shi’ite militias attacked Sunni mosques throughout Iraq. Gunmen attacked two Sunni mosques in the Hurriya neighborhood in Baghdad with rocket-propelled grenades and burned two others. At least five were killed in the attacks, but the Association of Muslim Scholars said many more were killed.521 Gunmen also opened fire on Sunni mosques in Baquba and Kirkuk, proving that sectarian conflict was no longer limited to the capital. Furthermore,
families in Hurriya received letters threatening them to leave their homes within 72 hours, but militiamen forcibly expelled some. 522

A Sadr City shop owner expressed the sentiments of many Shi’ites; “The feeling of revenge is more now than for the shrine in Samarra; that was just the building, and we can rebuild it. But what can we say about a family that has lost six members?” In response, Sunni neighborhood gangs prepared for reprisal attacks worse than in February. A Sunni man in Adhamiyah said that the community appreciated US military checkpoints, but that they were ready to defend their neighborhood. In a testament to the escalating civil war he said, “There are no more normal people in Adhamiyah, all of them are angry.” 523

A coordinated attack hit another Shi’ite neighborhood in Baghdad on December 2, 2006. Two car bombs exploded in the market area of Sadriya and another in the market at Hafidh Qadhi, 100 yards away. Mortar rounds showered the area only minutes later. The attack killed 60 and wounded close to 100. In apparent reprisal attacks, 55 bodies were found in Baghdad the following day, most of which showed signs of torture and bullet wounds attributed to Shi’ite militias. 524

Sectarian Displacement

Another key aspect of the civil war in Iraq was the rising number of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Soft ethnic cleansing was an increasingly common tactic used by ethnic groups to intimidate members of opposing sects as well as nationalists who refused to take a side in the civil conflict. Locally armed groups could win the support of communities by forcing individuals from minority sects to leave their homes through threats or killing of family members, leaving only members of one ethnic group.

The numbers of internally displaced persons reported by international or Iraqi organizations varied somewhat and it was unclear what methods the agencies used to determine their respective numbers. Yet, all the reports showed a dramatic increase in the number of displaced persons since the mosque bombing in February. Displaced Iraqis fleeing sectarian violence were forced to live in poor, often overcrowded conditions with little hope of finding meaningful employment.

Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis were forced to leave towns in which they were a sectarian minority. Many found refuge with family or friends, but others were forced to live in temporary housing set up by aid organizations. A large number of Iraqis also fled the country, many of whom saw little hope of returning.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees said in October 2006 that 365,000 Iraqis were displaced following the Samarra mosque bombing, bringing the total of internally displaced to 1.5 million since the beginning of the war. 525 The majority of the displaced appeared to flow from Baghdad, but almost all of the Governorates were affected. The Kurdistan Regional Government reported that 50,000 refugees arrived in the northern region of Kurdistan during a six-month period. 526

The Iraqi Ministry of Migration said in late September that a quarter of a million Iraqis had fled their homes and registered as refugees since the beginning of the year. The Migration Minister announced that roughly 40,000 had registered for assistance, which was up from 27,000 in July, demonstrating the devastating effects of continued sectarian violence, particularly in Baghdad, in
August and September. He also added that the figure did not include an uncounted number of Iraqis who had moved, but did not claim aid. Many did not register because the Ministry began demanding some type of documentation that the family was displaced - such as a death certificate of a family member, or a deed for house in neighborhood controlled by another sect. But many Iraqis, particularly Sunnis, distrusted authorities or did not have the type of documentation required so they simply did not register.

The sharp increase in internally displaced persons forced the Ministry to build more temporary encampments, including one in the southern Shiite city of Diwaniya, where 10,000 refugees arrived in only a few weeks. One man who lived just south of Baghdad recollected his last moments at home; “Gunmen told us to leave or they would kill us.”

The International Organization for Migration reported in early October that the number of Iraqis displaced by violence continued to rise. About 9,000 Iraqis were displaced weekly in the 15 central and southern provinces. The report said that the majority of Iraqis were relocating to Anbar province – over 33,000 people from Baghdad moved to the western cities of Falluja, Karma, and Hit. The majority of people moved in with families or friends and about 3% moved into camps set up by the Iraqi Red Crescent or Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration.

Aid organizations could not build camps quickly enough to house all of Iraq’s displaced: In Babil Province in the town of Mahmudiya a football stadium was converted into a displaced persons camp; in Kut the displaced lived in deserted military camps; in Diwaniya families lived in an abandoned amusement park; and in Najaf, refugees used cemeteries surrounding the city.

In the Shi’ite dominated south, many Sunni families fled to Sunni neighborhoods in Baghdad, or went as far north as Mosul. Mosul reported an increased influx of Sunnis in the latter half of 2006. Similarly, Shi’ites were an anomaly in Anbar Province. Not only could Shi’a not live in the western province, but also it was too dangerous to travel through. The problem arose that Shi’ite traders, truck drivers, and officials were blocked from the land routes to Syria and Jordan. An ad-hoc system arose in which transport companies would change to Sunni drivers through Anbar, but use Shi’a drivers when traveling out of Anbar towards Baghdad.

Sunnis and Shi’ite groups used intimidation and violence to force displacement of the other sect. An example of general intimidation in neighborhoods was threatening graffiti. In Sunni districts it was common to see “No Shi’a after today.” In Basra, Shi’ites wrote that Sunnis had to leave the city after July 2006. More often, however, intimidation was more personal. Individuals received letters or flyers at their homes telling them to leave. Some people reported receiving threatening text messages and calls on their cell phones – even more unnerving because the opposite sect found their phone numbers. Masked gunmen also made direct house calls, usually at night, telling people to leave the neighborhood. If the above warnings went unheeded, however, one or more family member was abducted, abused, and usually killed.

Many Sunnis also blamed the government for sectarian displacement. In heavily Shi’ite areas, such as Basra, Sunnis sited instances in which they lost their government jobs because Shi’ite militias were trying to manipulate local administration.

The rise in sectarian violence led some families in Baghdad to “swap houses” so that they were able to live in neighborhoods that were predominately inhabited by Iraqis of their same sect. Followers of Moqtada al Sadr capitalized on this growing trend to gain support among Shi’ites by helping them transition to their new neighborhoods. Sadrists welcomed new families to the
area, secured their streets and strategically relied on their control of ministries of education and trade to help relocated families enroll their children in new schools, and transfer their food ration cards to the new community. Sadr’s office in Samawa said, “We haven’t seen anything from the Iraqi government to solve the problem of the displaced. We are doing our best to help them and we promise we will protect them and will try to send them back to their home areas.” Although aid from local offices garnered political support for radical groups, it also guaranteed that refugees from both sects were given far more sympathy and attention than many other displaced persons across the world.

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Many Sunnis fled to Falluja from Baghdad because it was the closest Sunni dominated city from the capital. The US military estimated that in November 2006 about 150 Sunnis arrived from Baghdad. The city was still under tight US military control two years after battles between coalition forces and insurgents all but emptied the city. At the end of 2006, however, Falluja was a Sunni safehaven only 40 miles from the violence torn capital.

Numerous Sunni families were forced to leave the mostly Shi’ite Hurriyah neighborhood in Baghdad in early December. Shi’ite militias – with affiliation to the Mahdi Army – stormed Hurriyah and order the remaining Sunni families to leave or their houses would be burned down. According to Iraqi army officers, more than 100 families packed a few belongings and fled to Sunni neighborhoods or refugee camps.

Witnesses said that Shi’ite militiamen entered the neighborhood and killed a Sunni man as he was leaving his house. Sunnis families took up arms for protection, but were outnumbered by the Mahdi army. The militias burned down a few houses before ordering the remaining Sunnis to leave immediately. One Sunni man said that he saw twenty bodies lying in the street after the worst of the sectarian fighting. A Shi’ite witness said that Sunni snipers firing on Shi’ites in the street started the conflict.

Iraqi army officers tried to convince Sunni families that they would be protected, but most chose to flee. Residents also said that Iraqi police commandos staying in the neighborhood after the worst of the violence to keep fighters out and protect the remaining residents. One man said that people were nervous with the commandos around because they were believed to be infiltrated by Shi’ite militias, but he said, “For now they are keeping the people separated and the fighters out. Usually they leave after a few days. I hope they stay.” The incident resulted in the segregation of one of the last mixed neighborhoods in Baghdad, as well as creating at least 100 new internally displaced persons.

A Mahdi Army leader interviewed by the Sunday Times said of Baghdad, “It is a savage place where the wild animals fight for their piece of territory. Each animal wants to take more land than the other.” The US military drew a new map of Baghdad to reflect sectarian fault lines,
Four of the five most dangerous neighborhoods were west of the Tigris and were the remained mixed neighborhoods in the capital.

Further, the Iraqi National Security Advisor said, “There is a very clear connection between some of the displacements caused by armed groups in some neighborhoods in and around Baghdad and the political parties that are in the Council of Representatives.” A Kurdish Parliamentary member also said, “The religious and political leaders don’t seem to have the will to stop [sectarian displacement.] The Islamic party is involved. Al-Mahdi Army does it. These people are fighting each other.”

According to the International Organization for Migration:\footnote{538}

- The population of Baghdad was 6.7 million
- 146,322 Baghdadis were displaced since February 22, 2006
- 38,766 displaced person were living in Baghdad
- 85% of displaced living in Baghdad were from the capital
- 72% of displaced in Baghdad were Shi’a
- 27% of displaced in Baghdad were Sunni
- 17% of displaced in Baghdad were Yazidi

Prospects were also dim for those displaced persons who could afford to flee the country. Neighboring countries were increasingly wary of accepting Iraqi refugees who could bring the sectarian war to their streets. The September – October UN Assistance Mission to Iraq Human Rights Report said that 44% of Iraqis seeking asylum in Syria were Christians. The emigration was a result of increased attacks against Christians in the fall of 2006. The UNAMI report also stated that the Sabean-Mandean community decreased from 13,500 in 2001 to 4,000 in 2006.\footnote{539}

The UNAMI report also said that 418,392 people had been displaced due to violence and 15,240 due to military operation since the attack on the Samarra mosque in February 2006. The report said that UNHCR estimated that an additional 1.6 million became refugees outside the country since 2003. Between 500,000 and 700,000 people relocated to Jordan, 600,000 to Syrian, and 100,000 to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. In addition, 436,000 moved to Europe, the US, Africa, and Asia. Almost 3,000 Iraqis fled the country everyday. There was an approximate 50% increase in the number of asylum seekers in industrialized states between January and June 2006.\footnote{540}

The November 23 bombings in Sadr City prompted another major outflow of Iraqis. At the end of a three-day curfew, hundreds of Iraqi families headed to the Baghdad Airport to escape reprisal attacks that threatened to match those seen after the February Samarra mosque bombing. Families that could not afford to leave the country stocked up on food supplies and kept children from school, the Miami Herald reported.\footnote{541}

The New York Times reported on Iraqi refugees in Jordan. Jordanian officials estimated that nearly 750,000 Iraqis relocated to Amman – which had a population of 2.5 million - since 2003. Jordan had previously welcomed Iraqi refugees, but concerns rose at the end of 2006 that Iraqis were adversely affecting Jordan’s economic and security.
Jordan – a majority Sunni country – feared that fleeing Sunnis and Shi’ites would bring the sectarian war to the streets of Amman. Thus many Shi’ites trying to enter Jordan from Iraq said that they were being turned away and those living in Amman felt ostracized. Police in Jordan began cracking down on illegal refugees, but according to those interviewed in the Times article, Shi’ite were singled out for deportation – although the government denied the accusations.

Jordanians increasingly complained that Iraqi refugees contributed to a doubling in inflation and the cost of housing. Those Iraqis able to deposit $150,000 in a bank account in Amman were still granted residency status, but it became much more difficult for refugees – especially Shi’ites – to find safety in Jordan at the end of 2006.542

A woman who fled to Egypt said that if the security situation in Iraq improved, she would go back immediately – even if she did not have electricity or water. She said that the number of Iraqis in Egypt grew in 2006, but that she still felt like a stranger.543

A Crisis Group report said of sectarian displacement in Baghdad:544

As described by its inhabitants, the capital is now clearly split between the western bank of the Tigris (al-Kharkh), predominantly Sunni, and its eastern bank (al-Rusafa), primarily Shi’ite. Nevertheless, large minority enclaves remain on both sides. The urban belt surrounding Baghdad is experiencing the same process of sectarian cleansing, with locales now defined as either Sunni or Shi’ite, clear demarcation zones, and, as a result, significantly heightened tensions.

The report described the neighborhoods of Adhamiya and Kadhamiya as the most sensitive cases because they both lay in the “opposite” sectarian area. Other disputed towns included the Shi’ite city of Samarra – located a mainly Sunni area – and the Sunni cities of Yusifiya, Mahmudiya, and Iskandariya, which lay in the Shi’ite south.

As Figure II.11 shows, ethnic and sectarian displacement created major refugee populations. A late December article in the International Herald Tribune stated that 1.8 million Iraqi were living outside the country and 1.6 million had been internally displaced since 2003. Since February 2006, 50,000 moved within the country, and it appeared that the crisis was more pronounced among Shi’ites. The housing minister, Istabraq al-Shouk, estimated the housing shortage at about 2 million homes across Iraq.545

At the end of 2006, the UN estimated that there were 1.7 million internally displaced Iraqis, with average displacement at 40,000 to 50,000 a month. A table by UNHCR, shown below, indicated that the number of IDPs in Iraq and Iraqis living outside the country was expected to increase in 2007.546 A total of 470,094 Iraqis were displaced since the Samarra mosque bombing on February 22, 2006. The number of IDPs from Anbar Province was the highest in 2006 with 10,105 families displaced; Karbala had 7,570 families displaced; and Baghdad and Dohuk each had 7,000.547

In comparison, in testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee on January 16 Assistant Secretary of State Ellen Sauerbrey said that there were 500,000 internally displaced persons in Iraq.

The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq November – December Human Rights report said regarding the influx of IDPs into Kurdistan:548

Although the KRG authorities have received IDPs of all ethnicities in all three Governorates, recent entry regulations have restricted the movement of IDPs to reside and seek employment in the region. The lack of
a unified approach in all three Governorates has led to inconsistent policies and practices regarding IDPs. The assistance provided by KRG authorities favors Kurdish IDPs, while Arab IDPs have been given the least support because of security fears…

HRO had offered its support to the authorities in KRG in the formulation of regulations regarding IDPs consistent with human rights standards. However, government officials in Erbil have recently provided conflicting statements to the media and to HRO on the conditions for entry of IDPs, particularly with regard to the issuance of residence permits. There are approximately 119,270 IDP families in the Kurdistan Region, from before 2003 and as a result of the most recent violence in the south and center of the country. A small number of these, some 1,963 families are of Arab background, and, according to information received by HRO, are liable to receive discriminatory and unfair treatment.

The UN said that roughly 100,000 Iraqis fled to other countries in 2006. Jordan and Syria took on the majority of refugees, but both countries began to place restrictions on the number of Iraqis allowed across the border, and far fewer were granted refugee status. The US granted only 466 Iraqis refugee status since 2003, and only 3.5% of the total refugees allowed in the country in 2006, in part because of stringent security procedures.549

In Baghdad, where the problem was the most acute, about 1,000 families moved into the former Iraqi Air Defense headquarters and air force club. They lacked basic necessities and it was overcrowded, but they had nowhere else to go. Another family lived in an old hospital that had become a dumping ground. In Kirkuk, 20% of those displaced – mostly Kurds seeking to regain lost property – lived in old government buildings and temporary encampments. In Najaf, Shi’ites fleeing Sunni areas relied on religious charities and occupied ex-Ba’ath buildings.

Many internally displaced persons were fleeing violence or had been threatened in their previous location, but others simply could not afford the rent prices that had jumped after the fall of Hussein. One man working as a security official – one of the few jobs readily available – made about half the amount per month that he would need to rent a home for his family.

There were few government efforts to address the rising housing crisis. The Housing Ministry was building 17 complexes with 500 apartments each across the countries for families of those killed by militants, but that would create only 8,500 homes and it was unclear how the government would determine who exactly was eligible.550

The soft sectarian cleansing in the capital was not limited to homes; mosques in once-mixed neighborhoods were labeled as Shi’ite or Sunni which had once been shared. A mosque in Hurriya – where Shi’ite militias forced the last Sunni families out in late 2006 – had a paper sign on the door identifying it as a Shi’ite only mosque; a Sunni mosque down the street was boarded up.

Forced relocations were particularly hard on the rising number of widows in Baghdad. They were often told that they would need to move their families by compassionate neighbors of the other sect. Widows never received money for the homes they had to vacate. Most had little success finding jobs in new neighborhoods and only a small percentage received compensation from the government, making the economic toll devastating.551

A map by the Los Angeles Times showed the Baghdad neighborhoods that had “undergone dramatic demographic change since the 2003 invasion.” The northeastern Shaab, southern Risalah, northwestern Hurriya, and southeastern Zafaraniya neighborhoods had changed from “mixed Shi’ite to majority Shi’ite”; the central Adil, Yarmouk, and Amariya neighborhoods changed from “mixed Sunni to majority Sunni”; the southern Jihad neighborhood changed from...
“mixed Sunni to majority Shi’ite”; and the southern Dora neighborhood changed from “mixed Christian to majority Sunni”.552

The accompanying article stated that Shi’ite militias were overpowering Sunni groups in efforts to create sectarian enclaves. In the past, in general terms, to the east of the Tigris River was predominantly Shi’ite and to the west was majority Sunni, but efforts by Shi’ite militias – particularly the Mahdi Army – succeeded in creating Shi’ite majority zones to the west of the Tigris, such as Hurriya and Jihad. The resulting sensation was that Sunnis were being pushed further and further west, with many opting to flee to Anbar Province.

Sunni residents forced to flee Hurriya in December 2006 said that in many cases Iraqi security forces took down checkpoints to allow Shi’ite militias to enter and threaten Sunni families. If the intimidation campaign failed to make Sunnis leave, policemen would arrest those who fired at the militants.553

The main destination of internally displaced Sunnis was Falluja. The population reached pre-2004 levels of 300,000 by the end of 2006 and the State Department estimated that well over 40,000 Sunnis fled to Anbar Province in 2006. The majority came from Baghdad, but others traveled from the Shi’ite south to the Sunni safehaven. US troops stationed in Falluja, many of whom served during the battle for the city in 2004, saw the irony of their new role as “protectors of the Sunnis.”

In a busy week in Falluja, about 1,500 men got coveted IDs cards from the marine outpost. The outpost was manned 24 hours a day by marines and includes several waiting areas for the hundreds of Sunnis who arrived daily to get the cards that would help them find housing and work in the city. The marines used infrared retina scanners, fingerprinting, and interviews to ensure that the individuals had not committed a serious criminal act and were not likely to join with al-Qa’ida forces that still attacked the city regularly.

Talking with the internally displaced persons, most marines heard stories of death and intimidation in Baghdad and sorrow of having to relocate. The marines looked past some misdemeanors – such as taking money to fire a weapon at US troops two years ago – and they knew most refugees were just looking for security for their families. Falluja continued to suffer from insurgent attacks, reconstruction projects proceeded slowly, and the police force had yet to take control of any of the city’s checkpoints, but the US controlled city was the safest place for Sunni IDPs fleeing the sectarian violence of mixed provinces.554

The number of internally displaced persons in Iraq left little doubt that a process of soft sectarian cleansing – by both Sunni and Shi’ite groups – was under way. A former Middle East intelligence official, Wayne White, said of the crisis, “We may be about one-third of the way through the process, with little ability to do anything about it.”555
Figure II.11: Number of Internally Displaced Families by Province/Major Cities:
Comparison of December 2005 and October 2006

Source: Adapted from material provided by United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq, October 2006, available at: www.uniraq.org
### Figure II.12: The Refugee/Internally Displaced Person Crisis in Iraq, 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Population</th>
<th>Origin/Location</th>
<th>Jan 2007</th>
<th>Dec 2007 (projections/targets)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>To be Assisted and/or Registered by UNHCR</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Iraq</td>
<td>Palestinians</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>16,110</td>
<td>16,110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>11,960</td>
<td>11,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Syrian</td>
<td>870</td>
<td>870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sudanese</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDPs</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>1,700,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqis in neighboring countries</td>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>500,000-700,000</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>500,000-700,000</td>
<td>21,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>20,000-40,000</td>
<td>3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returnees</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Human Rights Abuses

The July-August 2006 United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) report on human rights stated that extremist groups continued to target ethnic and religious minorities. The Sabean-Mandean minority expressed fears that due to killings and migration, their thousands of years presence in Iraq would cease. In multi-ethnic Kirkuk, tensions remained heightened, and the Turkoman population felt particularly victimized. The region of Kurdistan reported the arrival of many Christian groups from Baghdad, where they experienced attacks from various extremist militias.

Additionally, in Mosul and the Ninewa plain, the Shabak minority cited continued subjection to violence and intimidation. The community reports that one hundred were killed between June and August 2006. All of the minorities feared political marginalization and worried about the lack of recognition of minorities in the Iraqi constitution.

The UNAMI report also voiced concern over the conditions and legality of detention centers in Iraq. The Ministry of Human Rights in Iraq reported 35,542 detainees at the end of August 2006. The majority of the detainees were held by the Ministry of Justice and MNF-I. Several thousand of detainees were “held outside the legal framework partly due to the fact that the Iraqi courts do not have the capacity to adjudicate such a high number of cases.” However, the report added that several hundred more judges were to be licensed by mid 2007, which would help with trying the unmanageable number of detainees.

Detainees held by MNF-I, MOD, MOI, and MOJ forces continued to be subject to torture during their interrogation. It was also clear that sectarian militias and death squads tortured their victims to find information about their sect. The majority of the bodies appearing at the morgues and on the streets showed signs of torture, such as electrocution, beating, burning, and broken bones. The UN’s Chief Rapporteur on torture also said that torture might have been more widespread than it was during Saddam Hussein’s regime.

The September - October 2006 United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) Report on Human Rights stated that extremist groups continued to target ethnic and religious minorities. Violence increased against the Christian minority following controversial comments made by Pope Benedict XVI on September 12. UNAMI reported that extremist groups threatened to kill Christians unless the Pope apologized. Extremists also intimidated Christians into hanging banners condemning the Pope’s remarks outside of churches in Iraq. On September 24 and 25 rockets were fired at the Chaldean church in Mosul an IED exploded inside the doorway. Also in Mosul, clergy said that priests in Iraq were too afraid to wear their clerical robes in public for fear of attacks.

The Sabean-Mandean community reported increased attacks in the early fall of 2006. In October, four Sabean-Mandeans were killed. The minority says that they experience intimidation and social ostrazation from neighbors or peers, but not from the official government of Iraq. Palestinian refugees in Iraq were also targeted during the reporting period. Refugees cited the use of mortars and light weapons to force them to relocate, but many had nowhere else to go and lacked legal documentation, according to the UNAMI report.

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The total number of detainees in Iraq was slightly lower in September and October than in the previous two-month period. UNAMI expressed concern, however, that there had been no reduction in the number of detainees held by MNF-I, despite reports of their continuous release. The Human Rights report also cited the worrisome condition of juvenile detainees in Iraq. According to a law passed in March 2005, juvenile detainees should have come under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, but due to lack of facilities, juveniles remained in the custody of the Ministry of Justice, which had previously been accused of detainee rights abuses.

In addition, UNAMI reported that Kurdish militias detained individuals in Kirkuk and transferred them the Kurdistan without notifying proper authorities. An inspection of prisons in the Kurdish region found that some prisoners had “been arrested without judicial intervention; most were arrested under violent circumstances; they had been held without trial for long periods and there had been complaints by family member that prisoners were held at unknown locations.”

**Security Initiatives**

Baghdad remained the most visible center of the civil war, but sectarian violence was spreading throughout the country. New security initiatives for Baghdad and Diyala provinces were announced. In Diyala, both Sunni insurgents and Shi’ite militias operated without restraint, leading the US to launch a counterinsurgency campaign with the support of Iraqi Army troops. In Anbar Province the Sunni insurgency battled US troops in the cities of Falluja, Ramadi, and Hit. Throughout the country, the US military was forced to shift attention from building up Iraqi security forces to stopping the cycle of sectarian violence.

Lt. Gen. David Petraeus, nominated as Commanding General MNF-Iraq, in answers to advance policy questions from the Senate Armed Services Committee, said of the major challenges in Iraq:

> The top challenge is providing the security necessary to reduce the cycle of violence in Iraq today. This will be a difficult mission and time is not on our side. We must focus on population security, particularly in Baghdad, to give the Iraqi government the breathing space it needs to become more effective. The second challenge is to continue the development of capable Iraqi Security Forces, relatively free of ethnic and sectarian bias. The Iraqi Army has made much progress, but is uneven and the police remain a challenge. The third challenge is the integration of the interagency effort to ensure that progress is made along all lines of operation – not just security, but economic, governance, and the rule of law as well. That is related to the fourth challenge, and this is the lack of capacity of the Iraqi government. Iraq has enormous natural resources and potential wealth. However, to take advantage of its blessing, not only must security be improved, but critical national issues must be resolved by the Iraqis, on issues such as national reconciliation, the devolution of power below Baghdad, the distribution of oil wealth, and so on. Only through unity of effort of all – coalition and Iraq, military and civilian – can we bring the full weight of our effort to bear on the difficult situation in Iraq.

Any new security initiative would clearly need to incorporate economic and political components as well as military. The key to measuring the success of offensives in Baghdad and throughout the country was not in tactical victories, but rather in the degree that US and Iraqi forces could win back control of economic and political space for the Iraqi government from sectarian groups.
Still Battling for Baghdad

By the fall of 2006, the security plan in Baghdad was fully directed by the Iraqi government. Al-Maliki was making the key decisions about force strength and where it should be applied. And the decision was clear that US and Iraqi forces would not be entering Sadr City – at least not by Iraqi sanction - to take out the Mahdi militia. The spokesman for the MNF-Iraq, Maj. Gen. William Caldwell, said that the US only provided advice to national security staff. US military officials, however, made it very clear that they were ready to move against the Mahdi Army whenever the call came.  

Operation Together Forward II at best produced mixed results. Sectarian killings continued on a daily basis in many parts of the capital and the death toll was marginally lower than the all time high the city witnessed in July. However, in the areas that coalition and Iraqi forces “secured and held,” murder rates were beginning to drop. In Masafi the murder rate plummeted from 6.8 on average a day to 1.1, according to US military sources. US and Iraqi officials pointed to the slow but steady progress in Baghdad and reminded critics that it was a city of 6.8 million. 

Suicide bombings reached their peak in the early fall, but sectarian murders and executions were still the number one killers of Iraqi civilians, reported a New York Times article. US and Iraqi forces continued to find dozens of bodies dumped around Baghdad everyday, most showing signs of torture attributed to sectarian death squads. US and Iraqi officials reported that the “clear and hold” strategy was effective in areas in which it had been implemented, but US military intelligence warned at the end of September that militias were re-infiltrating previously cleared neighborhoods.

In the predominantly Shi’ite Shaab neighborhood of Baghdad, joint US and Iraqi forces had conducted a massive security sweep. However, shortly thereafter a bus full of explosives barged into an army post in the neighborhood, and a double bomb exploded in the city center. The US intelligence official was most concerned that Iraqi police units left behind to “hold” the cleared areas were collaborating with death squads. Although some cleared areas saw a reduction in the number of murders and executions, it was clear that Operation Together Forward was far from comprehensively successful.

A similar situation occurred in the Dora neighborhood in southern Baghdad. In the summer Dora was one of the neighborhoods that experienced the worst sectarian violence. In August US and Iraqi troops moved into the area and conducted a massive security sweep, and for two months Dora remained relatively peaceful. Residents felt free to wander the streets again and stay out after dark. The troop presence remained as part of the “hold” phase in Operation Together Forward.

However, on October 10th a bomb exploded outside a busy bakery, killing ten and wounding four others. Six policemen were also killed that day when they responded to a report of a body in a car, which exploded as they approached. Another roadside bomb in Dora killed a policeman and wounded four others. The explosions underscored the difficulty facing US and Iraqi forces to maintain the peace after “clearing” neighborhoods.

In the first week of October MNF-I reported the highest number of vehicle born IED attacks in 2006. By the end of September Operation Forward Together II had completed the mission in seven neighborhoods: Shaab, Adhamiya, Ghazaliya, Ameriyah, East Mansour, Risalah, and Dora. But the “clear, hold and build” strategy had yet to begin in several of the most dangerous
neighborhoods: Adamiyah, Kadamiyah, and New Baghdad. And violence did not cease in Ghazaliya – despite US and Iraqi force presence. At the beginning of October, 15,400 US troops were involved in Operation Together Forward II along with about 45,000 Iraqi army and police.

As part of a plan to curtain sectarian violence, the Associated Press reported that Prime Minister Maliki announced that all security checkpoints in Baghdad would be manned by an equal number of Shi’ite and Sunni troops. Al-Maliki hoped that the two sects would keep tabs on each other. Checkpoint police were repeatedly accused of allowing militias to pass through – particularly the Mahdi army. It remained unclear, however, how the plan could be implemented considering the heavily Shi’ite makeup of the capital’s police forces.

By mid-October, attacks in Baghdad had increased 43 percent since the middle of the summer. A decline of 11 percent was evident in neighborhoods that had been the focus of sweeps by coalition and Iraqi forces, but overall this improvement was offset by increases elsewhere. In addition to the sweeps, the berm around Baghdad was completed and contained 28 checkpoints manned by Iraqis. Despite these efforts Gen. Peter Pace was doubtful about the ability of US forces to quell the violence by themselves, and was quoted by a news report as saying, “You cannot have enough men under arms 24-7 to stop the hatred killings.”

MNF-I spokesman General Caldwell agreed that a change in strategy would be necessary. On October 19 Caldwell said, “We are working with the government of Iraq to determine how best to focus our efforts… It’s clear that the condition under which we started are probably not the same today. And that does require some modifications to the plan.” Attacks increased 22% during Ramadan according to Caldwell. US and Iraqi officials have not announced any official change of strategy for the capital, but the “clear and hold” strategy of Operation Forward Together was doing little to stop the violence and civil war.

Some US military officers were beginning to agree with Prime Minister Maliki that the answer was political rather than military. One commander in the capital said, “There aren’t enough troops – Iraqi or US – to do this sort of thing everywhere; the answer to the sectarian problems is ultimately a political one.” Sectarian death squads operated in increasingly splintered cells – the US military estimated that 21-23 militias operated in Baghdad - making it difficult for joint US-Iraqi raids to isolate militiamen.

In a November 15 address to the Senate Armed Services Committee, the director of the Defense Intelligence Agency said, “Recent Coalition and ISF operations in Baghdad have achieved limited success.” He added that part of the security problem stemmed from al-Maliki’s “reluctance to conduct operations in Shia militia strongholds.” At the same committee hearing, General Abizaid, commander of CENTCOM, said that 80% of the sectarian killings in Iraq happened within a 35-mile radius of Baghdad.

Senator Reed questioned General Abizaid, Commander of CENTCOM, about the length of time the US and Iraq had until the violence in Baghdad reached the point of no return - to which the answer was four to six months. While political dialogue stalled and Sadr progressively lost control of his Mahdi Army, Baghdad remained the epicenter of a civil war that US and Iraqi officials were ever more powerless to stop.

Gen. Chiarelli, the day to day commander of US troops in Iraq, said that Operation Together Forward II had not produced the results that MNF-I was hoping for. He did say that the
communities in which coalition troops were able to “clear and hold” were experiences an improvement in daily life. He said that the progress was slow, but that results were seen in some neighborhoods, such as Amiriyah and Dora.574

A military slide of Baghdad obtained by the Sunday Times labeled the neighborhoods of Kadhamiya, Qadisiya, Amariya, and Ghazaliya as the most violent battlegrounds at the end of 2006. These were the last remaining mixed neighborhoods in Baghdad.575 In cleared neighborhoods, however, attacks were down to three a day.576

Renewed Efforts in Baghdad

US and Iraqi government efforts to secure Baghdad during 2006 failed to halt the growth of violence in the city. The US acknowledged the deficiencies of Operation Together Forward, and President Bush’s new strategy, announced on January 10, 2007, sought to remedy previous failures.577 The new strategy had the potential to bring security to the capital, but due to the sectarian alliances of the population in Baghdad as well as members of the Iraqi security forces, success was far from guaranteed.

The Pentagon’s August-November Stability and Security in Iraq Report described Operation Forward Together II as follows:578

OTF II was launched as a means for reducing violence in Baghdad. OTF II began on August 7, 2006, and quickly led to a significant reduction in death squad activity, as extremists concentrated on hiding their weapons and evading capture during intensive search operations. However, as the operation progressed, death squads adapted to the new security environment and resumed their activities in areas not initially targeted by OTF II. During September, the levels of violence and civilians casualties increased and in some cases almost returned to levels seen in July. Shi’a death squads leveraged support from some elements of the Iraqi Police Service and the National Police who facilitated freedom of movement and provided advance warning of upcoming operations. This is a major reason for the increased levels of murders and executions.

Tensions also rose between the US and Iraqi governments during the last few days of 2006. A joint US-Iraqi raid in Najaf – the province recently turned over to Iraqi control – killed a top Sadr aid, Sahib al-Amiri. The US military did not confirm Amiri’s relationship with Sadr, but said they had collected intelligence on him for months and had evidence that he sold weapons used against US and Iraqi forces.579 MNF-Iraq spokesman Maj. Gen. William Caldwell described Amiri as an “IED facilitator” and said that he was associated with an October 2006 IED attack on the police chief in Najaf. The raid had sought to detain Amiri, but when he aimed a weapon at an Iraqi soldier, a US solider killed him.580

Shi’ites protested in the streets of Najaf against US forces and al-Maliki demanded an explanation from the US military. The incident again showed the gap between the US-Iraqi military strategy of capturing individuals suspected of fomenting sectarian violence and al-Maliki’s attempts to find a political compromise with al-Sadr – which would clearly prove impossible if Sadr lost additional close aides to US attacks.581

Both sides did, however, try to find a new approach to securing Baghdad. On December 20, 2006 the Washington Post reported that Prime Minister Maliki had developed a new security plan for Baghdad. The initiative was still in its early stages, and it was unclear if it would receive support from enough parties. In the plan, Maliki urged US forces to aggressively target Sunni insurgents in outer Baghdad neighborhoods while he would work with al-Sadr to stop Mahdi Army attacks.
If the Shi’ite militia did not stop fomenting sectarian violence, Maliki would crack down with the use of force.

Maliki indicated his government would accept a temporary surge of US forces in the capital – which was still under consideration by top US military and civilian commanders. Al-Maliki’s advisers said that he feared marginalizing al-Sadr from the political process because it would escalate sectarian violence, but if the Mahdi Army did not stop attacks, US and Iraqi forces would take military action. One adviser said, “The prime minister, I can assure you, is not a fan of Moqtada Sadr in any way.”

Maliki called for a major change of US military strategy, which at the end of 2006 was concentrated in Baghdad’s center to curb sectarian reprisal attacks. Under Maliki’s plan US forces would be concentrated mainly in the outer Sunni neighborhoods of the capital and Iraqi forces would take over security of central Baghdad. The plan was aimed at showing Shi’ites that government forces could protect everyday Iraqis and that militias were no longer needed. However, it seemed unlikely that Sunnis would accept a crackdown in their neighborhoods and control of Baghdad’s center by Shi’ite security forces while Sadr was given extra time to tame his militia. Further, Sadr’s control over rogue components of the Mahdi Army was doubtful at best.582

In any case the US pushed forward with a different response amid growing Sunni and Shi’ite tensions. MNF-Iraq spokesman Maj. Gen. William Caldwell reaffirmed that the mission to secure the capital was the responsibility of the Iraqi security forces and that would only become clearer in 2007. He did say that more Iraqi forces were needed in Baghdad and that the Defense Ministry had moved one battalion in.583

On January 1, 2007 US troops led a raid on the Baghdad offices of Saleh Mutlaq, a Sunni and a senior member of the National Dialogue Front, which held 11 seats in Parliament. The US military and Iraqi police said they suspected the offices were being used as a safehouse by al-Qa’ida. The raid came as US and Iraqi troops sought to prevent retaliatory attacks the day after the execution of Saddam Hussein.584

Throughout the second week of January, 1,000 US and Iraqi forces clashed with Sunni insurgents on Haifa Street in Baghdad, 1,000 yards from the Green Zone. The street was home to most of the top-ranking Ba’ath officials in previous years. Haifa Street had been secured in the spring of 2005, but troops were unable to stay and ‘hold’ the area.

Sources familiar with the operation said that security on Haifa Street deteriorated after the arrest of a top Mahdi Army official, which created an opening for Sunni insurgents to attack the minority Shi’ite civilians who had moved to the street from nearby Khadamiya. On January 6, 27 bodies were found in the Sheik Marouf neighborhood on Haifa Street, and all were Shi’ites. When Iraqi forces went to investigate, they were attacked by insurgents. US and Iraqi forces then began an offensive against the insurgents, which lasted at least four days and was only ended with the aid of US air power.

In the fighting on January 7, the New York Times reported that eleven Iraqi Army soldiers were killed when they ran out of ammunition. The fighting waged for eleven hours on January 9, showing how entrenched the insurgents were in the Haifa Street area. A Sunni resident said insurgents had taken over to such a degree that a top-ranking al-Qa’ida official “seized control of the Rafadin bank, set up an Islamic court and began handing out death sentences.”585
The key issue was the difference between the Maliki government focus on the Sunnis and the US focus on the extremists on both sides. On January 6 Prime Minister Maliki said that he was cracking down on Shi’ite militias and Sunni insurgents in Baghdad in a new security initiative. He did not give the details of the plan, but said that Iraqi troops would be doing door-to-door searches with the support of US troops. He said that the plan would come down hard on anyone operating outside the law, regardless of sectarian affiliation.586

Sources close to al-Maliki said that the Iraqi leader wanted an additional 20,000 Iraqi troops to focus on Sunni insurgents and that he would work out a political solution with the Shi’ite militias.587 Al-Maliki did say that the offensive was open ended and, “We are fully aware that implementing the plan will lead to some harassment of all beloved Baghdad residents, but we are confident they fully understand the brutal terrorist assault we all face.”588

In contrast, Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno, the US day-to-day commander of ground operations in Iraq, said that previous offensives in Baghdad failed to stop sectarian violence due to a shortage of Iraqi troops and a singular focus on Sunni neighborhoods. He said of Operation Together Forward:589

We were able to clear areas. We were not able to hold the areas. We were not able to get security forces in there for an extended period of time that protected the people… I think what happened was we overestimated the availability of Iraqi security forces initially, we didn’t have enough here. So we have to be able to make sure we have enough forces, Iraqi and coalition, in order to do it this time… You have to go after both Sunni and Shia neighborhoods. Together Forward was mostly focused on Sunni neighborhoods, and we’ve got to do both.

Odierno said, however, that Sadr was “working within the political system,” and thus US forces would not seek him out personally. 590 The new offensive would target rogue Mahdi Army militiamen. Odierno indicated that the US learned from the failures of Operation Together Forward. He also stated that the Iraqi government needed to come up with a militia policy because, “out of the militias, 80% of them are probably OK. We could probably immediately put them into either the police or the army.”591

By 2007, the US seemed to have pressured the Maliki government into accepting a more balanced approach. On January 10, 2007 President Bush outlined the official new strategy for the US in Iraq, and it was clear that Baghdad would the tactical target location. President Bush stated:592

The most urgent priority of success in Iraq is security, especially in Baghdad. Eighty percent of Iraq’s sectarian violence occurs within 30 miles of the capital. This violence is splitting Baghdad into sectarian enclaves, and shaking the confidence of all Iraqis. Only Iraqis can end the sectarian violence and secure their people. And the government has put forward an aggressive plan to do it…

Now let me explain the elements of this effort: The Iraqi government will appoint a military commander and two deputy commanders for their capital. The Iraqi government will deploy Iraqi Army and National Police brigades across Baghdad’s nine districts. When these forces are fully deployed, there will be 18 Iraqi Army and National Police brigades committed to this effort, along with local police. These Iraqi forces will operate from local police stations – conducting patrols and setting up checkpoints, and going door to door to gain the trust of Baghdad residents…

This is a strong commitment. But for it to succeed, our commanders say the Iraqis will need our help. So America will change our strategy to help the Iraqi carry out their campaign to put down sectarian violence and bring security to the people of Baghdad. This will require increasing American force levels. So I’ve committed more than 20,000 additional American troops to Iraq. The vast majority of them – five brigades

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will be deployed to Baghdad. These troops will work alongside Iraqi units and be embedded in their formations. Our troops will have a well-defined mission: to help Iraqis clear and secure neighborhoods, to help them protect the local population, and to help ensure that the Iraqi forces left behind are capable of providing the security that Baghdad needs…

Many tonight will ask why this effort will succeed when previous operations to secure Baghdad did not. Well, here are the differences: In earlier operations, Iraqi and American forces cleared many neighborhoods of terrorists and insurgents, but when our forces moved on to other targets, the killers returned. This time, we'll have the right force levels we need to hold the areas that have been cleared. In earlier operations, political and sectarian interference prevented Iraqi and American troops from going into neighborhoods that are home to those fueling the sectarian violence. This time, Iraqi and American forces will have the green light to enter those neighborhoods – and Prime Minister Maliki has pledged that political or sectarian interference will not be tolerated…

I've made it clear to the Prime Minister that America’s commitment is not open-ended. If the Iraqi government does not follow through on its promises, it will lose the support of the American people – and it will lose the support of the Iraqi people. Now is the time to act…

Secretary of Defense Gates added more details at a press conference the following day:

The term "surge" has been used in relation to increasing U.S. troop levels, and an increase certainly will take place. But what is really going on and what is going to take place is a surge across all lines of operations: military and nonmilitary, Iraqi and coalition. The president's plan has Iraqis in the lead and seeks a better balance of U.S. military and nonmilitary efforts than was the case in the past. We cannot succeed in Iraq without the important nonmilitary elements Secretary Rice just mentioned.

The increase in military forces will be phased in. It will not unfold overnight. There will be no D-Day. It won't look like the Gulf War. The timetable for the introduction of additional U.S. forces will provide ample opportunity early on and before many of the additional U.S. troops actually arrive in Iraq to evaluate the progress of this endeavor and whether the Iraqis are fulfilling their commitments to us.

This updated plan builds on the lessons and experiences of the past. It places new emphasis on and adds new resources to the holding and building part of the clear, hold and build strategy.

There were 22,000 Iraqi Army forces operating in Baghdad at the time of Bush’s speech. The new Iraqi deployment added 8,000, bringing the total, including national police, to around 50,000. The President’s plan placed 41,000 US troops in the capital, including the 15,000 already operating in the greater Baghdad area at the start of 2007. Given the weaknesses in Iraqi forces, this meant the US would have to take the lead in the fighting as well as shaping the offensive.

At a joint press conference on January 15, however, General George Casey and Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad stated that the security plan for Baghdad was “designed, structured, and led by the Iraqis.” Khalilzad also confirmed that the operation had no deadline, although plans to have Iraqi forces fully operational in the spring of 2007 and all provinces under Iraqi control by November were still in effect.

When asked how the US and Iraq were combating militias and sectarian violence outside of the capital, Gen. Casey said, “The Baghdad plan itself is integrated into a holistic countrywide plan that the multinational corps is developing. And security for Baghdad won’t just come from securing the inside of Baghdad. It comes from the support zones around the outsides, as far away as you suggest – Baquba and Ramadi and Falluja. It goes all the way out to the borders to stop the flow of foreign fighters and support coming.”

Gen. Petraeus expanded on the use of US and Iraqi forces – and the effectiveness of ISF - in Baghdad in answer to advance questions from the Senate Armed Services Committee for his nomination as Commanding General of US forces in Iraq:
Forces currently in or moving to Baghdad should be sufficient to conduct effective counterinsurgency operations given the anticipated political-military situation and planned phased operations…

Baghdad is a city of roughly 6 million people, so a 1:50 ratio of security forces to population would be equal to roughly 120,000 counterinsurgents. Iraqi Army, Police and Special Operations Forces, together with US forces currently on the ground or deploying to Baghdad in the months ahead, total approximately 85,000 – though, to be sure, not all of those are at the same levels of effectiveness, and some of the Police undoubtedly are of limited effectiveness. However, we do not necessarily have to secure every part of Baghdad at once – this can be done in stages – and will have to be done that way given the way the forces are expected to flow into Iraq. Beyond that, tens of thousands of ministry security forces and tens of thousands of civilian (often third country) contracted guard forces protect key sites in Baghdad (including, for example, the US embassy, MNSTC-I HQs, the Ministry of Oil, etc) that MNF-I and the Iraqi government would otherwise have to detail soldiers or police to protect. These forces, again, number in the tens of thousands – and although by no means all are of high capability and some are undoubtedly compromised, they do secure hundreds of sites that otherwise would require coalition or Iraqi military or police forces. Thus, with the additions of all five US brigades under orders to reinforce Baghdad and the Iraqi Security Forces either in Baghdad or headed to the city, there should be sufficient military forces available to achieve our objective of security Baghdad.

**Uncertain Iraqi and US Agreement**

Only days after President Bush announced the new strategy, American officials in Baghdad reported disagreements with Iraqi officials over the offensive. According to an article in the *New York Times*, the primary concern of US officials was that the Iraqi government would fail to follow through on its vow to attack Shi’ite militias. On official said, “We are implementing a strategy to embolden a government that is actually part of the problem. We are being played like a pawn.”

There was also disagreement between the US and Iraq over the appointment of the Iraqi operational commander for the Baghdad offensive. Al-Maliki selected Lt. Gen. Aboud Qanbar – a Shi’ite from southern Iraq and unknown by most American commanders – despite opposition by the US military. Qanbar would be partnered with the commander of the US 1st Calvary Division, Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil Jr. Similar partnerships would continue down the chain of command, another issue troubling US officials.

Most of the statements from the US and Iraq seemed to indicate that Prime Minister Maliki would be in overall control. American officials, however, said that the superior authority was a council composed of Maliki, the ministers of defense and interior, the Iraqi national security advisor, and the top US commander in Iraq. 595

When asked if he understood the command and control relationships between US and Iraqi forces in the Baghdad security plan, Gen. Petreaus said: 596

This is an exceedingly important issue. Getting the relationship between our forces and the Iraqi security forces right is critical to operating together. At its simplest, US commanders will command and retain operational control of US forces; Iraqi commanders will command Iraqi forces and exercise operational control over them once transitioned from the tactical control of US forces (this has taken place for the 6th Division and in the case of many other Iraqi unites in recent months). If confirmed, I intend to ensure that there is very close cooperation between US and Iraq headquarters to ensure unity of effort, careful coordination of operations, and clear knowledge of what each force is doing. Of necessity, this will include Iraqi and US Special Operations Forces and Police Forces as well. As I understand it, the Baghdad plan is to be an Iraqi Plan, devised by the Iraqis in consultation with, and supported by, MNF-I and MNC-I, and...
US Forces, under the command of US commanders, will act in support of the Iraqi effort to establish security in Baghdad.

Another key concern was logistics – such as supplies for Iraqi troops. US officials also said that there were plans to build 30 to 40 “joint security stations” in Baghdad, but that many would need to be expanded and reinforced before they could house American and Iraqi operation centers.697

Gen. Petraeus expanded on the use of joint security stations:

As explained to me, under the Baghdad Security Plan, Coalition forces will establish Joint Security Stations (JSSs) with the Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police, and the Iraqi National Police. The stations will be strategically positioned throughout the city to accommodate dispersed, joint patrols, and to provide central command and control hubs that ultimately feed back into the Baghdad Security Command. The establishment of JSSs will include enhancing force protection and developing essential sustainment and life support. Many of the JSSs are located at existing Iraqi Police Stations, but will require vulnerability assessments prior to occupation by coalition forces. Based on these assessments the necessary forces protection enhancements will be completed to mitigate the risks of attack. Force protection enhancements will include improvements such as entry control points, external barriers to redirect traffic flows and/or reinforce perimeters, increased protection from indirect fires, and guard posts/towers where required. Additionally, robust Quick Reaction Forces, as well as redundant and secure communications with parents FOBs and with coalition patrols operating in the area, will enhance the force protection posture of each JSS.

The use of Kurdish troops presented further problems. Kurdish troops were to compose two of the three Iraqi army brigades sent to Baghdad. The use of Sunni Kurdish forces was supposed to reduce instances of sectarianism in the Iraqi security forces in the Baghdad offensive, but some Kurdish leaders thought it was exacerbate the problem. Mahmoud Othman, a member of the Iraqi Kurdish Coalition said, “There are fears that a fight like this, pitting Kurds against the Arabs, is bound to add an ethnic touch to the conflict. I am against the move… and there are many in the Iraqi parliament who are against it too.”

Critics of the Kurdish forces also said that they were fighting for the Kurdistan Regional Government, not Iraq as a whole. The use of Kurdish forces in the capital was clearly a risk, but they were among the better equipped and trained, and therefore had the potential to play a key role.699

Gen. Petraeus said of the use of Kurdish units:

I have confidence in the expected performance of these units, though there are likely to be challenges due to language issues (few of their enlisted soldiers speak Arabic) and, possibly, due to operation away from predominantly Kurdish areas for the first time (though some of the battalions did serve in mixed-ethnic areas in the vicinity of Mosul). In considering other factors, there has been little in the way of corruption or other sectarian issues reported in these units. Additionally, because of their combat experience and predominantly Kurdish soldiers, there tends to be a higher level of cohesion in these formations. Because of their home locations, there is a lower likelihood these units will have issues with infiltration by anti-government entities. Finally, commanders involved in training these units, as well as their Coalition advisors, assess that they are unlikely to be biased when conducting operations in the locations to which they are being assigned.

The Iraqi government did, however, take action against the militias. In an interview on January 17 Prime Minister Maliki said that 400 Mahdi militiamen had been recently arrested. Some Mahdi militiamen said that they were reducing their presence on the streets of the capital in preparation for what they believed was a US military offensive targeting the militia.

Mahdi militiamen interviewed by the New York Times said that they wanted to avoid full scale confrontation with the US because it would reduce their status and potentially their income,
which many young men had grown accustomed to. The Mahdi army, they said, would fade into the crowd rather than confront the US head on, as Sadr did in 2004.601

This illustrated a key potential problem in dealing with sectarian conflict. Regardless of whether the Mahdi army engaged US forces, the widespread popular support for the militia and the thousands of fighters in Baghdad alone meant that neither the US nor the Iraqis could capture them all. This fact underscored the point that victory in Iraq could no longer be gauged by tactical successes; the growing sectarianism and ethnic conflict meant that the fight for all sides was for control of political and economic space.

For example, the Times article noted that residents of the majority Shi’ite neighborhood of Topchi paid 3,000 Iraqi dinars a month to support the local Mahdi Army members, who “are members of the council, and they arrange trash collections and housing for Shiite refugees, often settling them into empty Sunni homes.”602

A New Strategy for Diyala

In mid to late 2006 security in Diyala deteriorated to the point that Sunni insurgents walked the streets in Baquba, bodies were found daily on city streets, insurgents and militias used intimidation campaigns to force the relocation of thousands of people, the Iraqi security forces were infiltrated by militias and not trusted by much of the population, and reconstruction ground to a halt.

Diyala was 55% Sunni with abundant farmland and untapped oil resources, making it a strategic province for both Sunni and Shi’ite armed groups. Sunni insurgents in Diyala, where a US airstrike killed Zarqawi, were composed of al-Qa’ida in Iraq, Ansar al Sunna, but primarily the Shura Council and the 1920 Revolutionary Army, according to US officials.

Although the US maintained a strong presence in Diyala, Iraqi security forces were supposed to carry out most of the missions. The US strategy in 2006 was to train and equip ISF while taking a hands off approach. ISF in Diyala, however, were overwhelmingly Shi’a and not trusted by the Sunni majority. The provincial commander was hand picked by the Badr Brigade. Shi’ite police did not dare enter many Sunni towns and thus insurgents had a virtual safehaven. In a video in November, insurgents were seen on the streets pulling Shi’ites out of their homes and killing them, leaving little doubt about who held the real control.

Members of the US 1st Cavalry Division took over security in Diyala in October 2006, and decided on a major change in strategy. The US, with Iraqi help, would launch a counterinsurgency campaign to root out both Sunni insurgents and Shi’ite militias. US troops, however, had to convince the Iraqi ground forces commander, General Shakir, to change his strategy. Shakir had been accused of allowing torture of Sunni captives and bullying and abusing Sunni civilians.

Colonel Sutherland, commander of the 3rd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, said that after several joint raids, General Shakir agreed to adopt a classic counterinsurgency campaign and refrain from intimidation of Sunni civilians. Sunni tribal chiefs, however, said that they wanted to cooperate with US forces, but would not until the security situation improved and General Shakir was replaced.
Once again, tactical victories also meant counterinsurgency, but did not provide for the “hold and build” aspect. Diyala Province was in desperate need of basic services at the start of 2007. There was little clean water and most shops in Baquba remained closed. The new US initiative acknowledged that the previous hands off approach did not work in a province dominated by a Shi’ite council and police forces, but with a Sunni majority. The goal was to make city streets safe enough that shops could reopen and supplies could reach their destination, but US and Iraqi forces would most likely face a tough battle against insurgents and militias who saw the province for its vital strategic importance.603

The growing violence outside Baghdad presented other problems. In early January 2007 the Los Angeles Times reported on a new initiative in Diyala province – located just north of Baghdad and bordering Iran – to restore security. On January 4, 2007 1,000 US and Iraqi forces launched the first offensive in the new counterinsurgency strategy. US military officials said the strike targeted a series of farms and irrigation canals suspected of housing weapons caches, safe houses, and training ranges. However, smoke-signals and flares from the target area as well as deep trenches and interdiction of canal bridges indicated that insurgents were prepared for the attack.

US commanders from the 3rd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Div. said that details of the offensive were kept secret from the 400 Iraqi soldiers of the 5th Army Div. According to the Los Angeles Times article, the launch of the joint operation was chaotic as Iraqi army vehicles started off in the wrong direction and blocked the road. By the time the forces reached the insurgent stronghold, no possible insurgents remained.

Lt. Col. Andrew Poppas for the 3rd Brigade said of insurgents in Diyala, “We will never kill or capture them all, and even if we do, there are plenty more who will take their place,” acknowledging the ‘undrainable swamp’. He added, “Our success, in my view, will be based on continued presence, denying this place as a safehaven.”604

On January 7, US air power and joint US-Iraqi ground forces attacked the series of irrigation canals in Hamoud – near Balad Ruz - Diyala Province, where US and Iraqi forces expected hundreds of insurgents to be hiding. The previous day, troops burned the high reeds in the area give them a better view for the air assault. The US military said they killed 21 armed insurgents in the assault.

However, a series of anti-tank mines and extreme mud slowed the ground assault and killed two Iraqi soldiers and wounded 27. When forces reached the town of Hamoud, they again found only woman and children. The overall operation took five days and wore heavily on Iraqi and US troops, but US commanders believed they had trapped many of the insurgents in underground caves and bunkers.605

On January 22 a US Army spokesman from the 3rd Brigade reported that security conditions in Diyala were steadily improving. He said that people began to reopen shops that had been closed for months. The offensive in Hamoud killed one-hundred members of the Shura Council and US and Iraqi troops detained an additional fifty.

However, only minutes before the announcement of improving conditions, insurgents claiming to be members of Ansar al-Sunna kidnapped the Mayor of Baquba, Khalid al-Sanjari. Witnesses said that the insurgents did not take any guards, and clearly came with a purpose.606
Progress and Problems in Anbar Province

Anbar remained a major problem in both military and political terms. In the middle of September, tribal leaders from 25 of some 31 tribes in Anbar province met and announced that they were joining forces to fight insurgents, both native and foreign, in their province. The New York Times reported that one tribal leader estimated the force of the united tribes at 30,000 armed men. He estimated the insurgents at about 1,300 and claimed that they were backed by foreign intelligence services. After agreeing to unite, the leaders sent a letter to Prime Minister Maliki looking for support. Soon after in a meeting with the Prime Minister the chiefs agreed to cooperate with government efforts and Maliki promised Iraqi troops for Anbar province.

Despite such recognition of a common enemy, however, broader agreement between the Sunni tribal leaders and other groups in Iraq remained elusive. In a meeting with members of Maliki’s government tribal leaders made a variety of demands including the canceling of plans for federal regions, proclaiming Iraq as an Arab nation, and insisting on an equitable distribution of oil revenues. These demands clashed with the plans and desires of both the Shi’a or Kurdish leadership. Despite differences, Iraqi government personnel expressed optimism that by focusing on each side’s most important demands common ground could be found.

On October 17, Shaykh Sattar Buzay Abu-Rishah, head of Al-Anbar Salvation Council, said that three regiments from the tribes were ready to be deployed. Each regiment included 200-300 volunteers from each tribe. He added that the troops had been formed with the supervision of Interior Minister Jawad al-Bulani and Maj. Gen. Ahmad al-Juburi, the ministry's under-secretary.

The dangerous security situation in Anbar received renewed attention when the chief of intelligence for the Marine Corps in Iraq, Col. Pete Devlin, filed an unusual secret report concluding that the prospects for securing the province were dim, and that US security efforts in the area were largely hopeless. Devlin’s report described a dangerously fragmented environment in Anbar, where the local governments collapsed, and the central government exerted no authority—creating a political vacuum that was being filled by al-Qa’ida in Iraq.

Officials who read the classified report said that the strikingly pessimistic assessment represented the first time that a US military officer filed such a dire report from Iraq. The report was circulated among national security circles, and one Defense Department official said, “I don’t know if it is a shock wave, but its made people uncomfortable.” Marine Maj. Gen. Richard C. Zilmer said that he had not seen the report, but he concurred with the intelligence assessment and called it “frank and candid.” He added that the insurgency would be “problematic” in western Iraq until comparable success was achieved politically and economically.” However, Zilmer also cited optimistic trends, particularly that of training Iraqi security forces in the Anbar province. He concluded that the situation was “complex” and that Devlin’s report only focused on the causes of the insurgency, not on the progress that had been achieved to date.

Several weeks later, another US commander in Anbar, Col. Sean B. MacFarland of the 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division, said the goal in the province was to reduce violence to a level at which the Iraqis could defeat the insurgency. AP reported him as saying, “they will always be perceived as more legitimate than an external force like our own.” Col. MacFarland said that putting a timeline of defeating the insurgency in Anbar was difficult. He said the key to victory was perseverance, and that could take any number of years. He did, however, comment that the
US was making strides against al-Qa’ida in Iraq; attacks against US and Iraqi forces dropped from roughly 20 per day to 15, and recruitment of Iraqi security forces “soared 10-fold.”

Drawing US troops from Anbar province to fight in Baghdad created gaps that insurgents were quick to fill. US commanders in Anbar agreed that forces needed to be channeled to the capital to curtain sectarian violence, but they were also concerned that some of their gains in 2006 would be lost. US officials had expressed concerns before Operation Together Forward started that there were insufficient troops in the western province. Captain David Ramirez of the 14th Cavalry regiment was sent from Anbar to Baghdad and said, “Seeing the fruits of your labor lost is frustrating.” Another relocated captain quoted in the AP article added, “Where we’re not, the insurgency goes there. That’s just how an insurgency works.”

It was up to the remaining troops in Anbar to prevent the insurgency from filling the holes. Commanders hoped that the recent agreement with Iraqi tribes to fight insurgents would make up for the losses. The relocations also demonstrated lessons in fighting a counterinsurgency. Anbar commanders repeatedly voiced concerns that moving troops around limited the military’s ability to build trust with Iraqi civilians and convince them to cooperate. For example, in 2005 five US units rotated through the city of Hit.

However, in mid-October Gen. William Caldwell suggested that one area of improvement was the relationship between Sunnis and US forces. “There’s no question we’re seeing that the Sunni extremist elements are in fact being much more engaging with coalition forces,” he said.

US recruiting efforts in Anbar were hampered by the Iraqi government’s neglect to pay police forces. US Marine Brig. Gen. Robert Neller, deputy commander of US troops in Anbar, said that some police officers, most of whom were Sunnis, had not been paid in months. He added, “That’s why people in Anbar think the government in Baghdad doesn’t want them to succeed.” Officials in the capital said that policemen did not receive their checks because of corruption in Anbar; officials in the western province submitted false names and pocketed the money for themselves, according to an advisor to the prime minister.

Gen. Neller said that US forces were making progress training their Iraqi counterparts despite the paycheck delays, but it did reduce Sunni support of the Shi’ite led government. In Anbar province in November 2006 there were 7,000 Iraqi police officers and 13,000 army soldiers, along with 33,000 US troops.

US forces were also fighting against an intimidation campaign waged by Sunni insurgents. In the small town of Rawah, there were only seven police officers in November; numbers declined rapidly after insurgents killed a policeman in June and dragged his head through the marketplace. In Qaim along the Iranian border Mayor Fahran Fahran said that he desperately needed equipment and money to pay his police force. He said that he received no support from the national government.

At the Senate Armed Services Committee briefing, Senator McCain asked General Abizaid if Anbar Province was under control. Abizaid said, “Al Anbar Province is not under control… I believe that you can’t have a main effort everywhere and that the preponderance of military activity needs to go to the Baghdad area.”

Gen. Michael Hayden, director of the CIA, told the Senate Armed Services Committee that approximately 10,000 Sunnis in Anbar Province were fighting the coalition presence and impeding progress in Iraq, but he added that they were not all “full time fighters.”
In late November, the US Marine Corp filed an updated report of Col. Pete Devlin’s bleak August assessment of the fight in Anbar. The Washington Post reported that according to a US intelligence official, the report did not cite any improvement in Anbar since August. The assessment found, “the social and political situation has deteriorated a to a point” that US and Iraqi forces “are no longer capable of militarily defeating the insurgency in al-Anbar.” The reported added, “The potential for economic revival appears to nonexistent.” The contents of Devlin’s report entitled, “State of the Insurgency in al-Anbar” were previously not made public.621

The bleak assessment of reconstruction and military victory in Anbar Province provided no reprieve from the reality of the escalating civil conflict in the rest of the country. If US and Iraqi forces were to continue fighting the insurgency, the operation would clearly take years – an option the US military would have to shelve if American public opinion and Congress forced gradual or immediate withdrawal.

In mid-December the first class of Iraqi policemen recruited by Sunni Sheiks in Anbar graduated. In September, the clerics had agreed to urge Sunni men to join the police force to fight against al-Qa’ida. Since the deal, police enlistments in Ramadi increased from less than 100 to the quota of 400 a month. US forces even created a special Emergency Response Unit to accommodate the excess volunteers.

Further, membership in Sawa- the official organization name of the clerics – rose to 60 tribal leaders. US troops were hopeful that the new police force would help stop the constant flow of al-Qa’ida attacks in Anbar, and bring the Sunnis closer to the political process. The military said that since the deal, attacks by local resistance fighters in Anbar dropped 40%, but attacks against US troops did not appear to fall; Anbar still accounted for the majority of US fatalities at the end of 2006.622

US military commanders in Anbar province saw slow progress. They stated that civilians started selling goods to the Iraqi Army, signaling that trust in the security forces was growing. However, most of the provincial council in Ramadi had fled and was operating from a hotel in Baghdad. In efforts to gain help from Baghdad, the marines assigned an office to lobby on behalf of Anbar for funding, supplies, and Iraqi security forces.

Marines note that although civilian support was rising for local officials and forces, most Sunnis in Anbar lacked trust for the central government. Iraqis in Falluja have “hysteria about Shia death squads; that people dressed as police will arrive in the middle of the night.” US forces set up checkpoints around Falluja to help quell fears. Troops realized, however, that whatever progress they make in Anbar is tied to what happens in Baghdad, which had the potential to make all efforts in the west obsolete.623 Maj. Gen. Zilmer in Ramadi said, “If we lose Baghdad, it doesn’t matter what we are doing out here. It will be rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic.”

In Ramadi US marines were forced to take a more “subtle” approach to taking on insurgents because much of their strength had been diverted to Baghdad. Instead of encircling and clearing the city, US and Iraqi forces blocked major roads into the city and then pushed forward with combat outposts.624

A tribal Sheik and a member of Sawa – the organization formed by Sheiks in the fall of 2006 to counteract al-Qa’ida and recruit policemen - said that his “forces” had significantly reduced the number of weapons and foreign fighters in Anbar, but that there were thousands of al-Qa’ida

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fighters left in Anbar alone. He said that al-Qa’ida was responsible for 30% to 40% of insurgency in Iraq. He believed that many al-Qa’ida fighters and weapons came from the neighboring countries of Syria and Saudi Arabia.\(^{625}\)

In early January an official in a tribal council in the western province of Anbar said an insurgent leader from Ansar al-Sunna had been captured and two of his aides, both from Yemen, were killed near Ramadi. In addition, Iraqi troops arrested Ibrahim al-Jouburi, known as the Prince of al Qaeda in Yusufiya, and Abdullah al-Zoubai, leader of the 20th Revolutionary Brigades group in Yusufiya.

The Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. James T. Conway, said in December 2006 that he did not think a surge of US troops would help security in Anbar, rather, he said that the marines there needed more time to do their job. He said, “I fear there are two timelines out there. One is how long it’s going to take us to do the job. One is how long the country is going to allow us to do the job. And they’re not syncing up.”

Roughly 20,000 marines were deployed in Anbar at the end of 2006. Conway was among other top military officials who urged the President not to send a surge of US troops in 2007. Conway added that units would be most likely extended beyond their scheduled return dates in 2007, but that he hoped to increase time at home between deployments.\(^{626}\)

In his January 10 speech, however, President Bush announced that 4,000 additional US troops would be sent to Anbar Province.\(^{627}\) The military also continued to try new political initiatives. In early January the US marines in al-Anbar opened dialogue with several women’s groups in Anbar in hope that women would persuade their husbands and sons to fight against the insurgency. The military called the program the ‘Woman’s Engagement Program’.\(^{628}\)

### Transferring Control to Iraqi Forces

US forces continued to nominally transfer control to Iraqi forces. In the early fall of 2006, the quantity and confidence of Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) had increased, but so had the level of violence. Police forces, especially in Baghdad, continued to be accused of having militia components.

Italy formally handed over security responsibility of the southern Dhi Qar province to Iraqi forces on September 21, 2006. The relatively peaceful province was the second of the country’s 18 provinces to be handed over to Iraqi control by coalition forces after the July transfer of power in Al-Muthanna province. Around 1,860 Italian and 430 Romanian troops had been in charge of security in Dhi Qar.

Despite the transfer and the growth of Iraqi security forces, the US military was increasingly stretched in the early fall of 2006. US forces increased to nearly 150,000 and the tours of two American brigades were extended to maintain a force of at least 145,000 US troops in Iraq at least through the spring of 2007. As of October 2006, in Baghdad there were 9,000 Iraqi army, 12,000 national police, 22,000 local police, and 15,000 coalition forces.\(^{629}\) Iraqi forces numbered 326,000 in December – 138,000 army and 188,000 police\(^{630}\) – but the actually number of available forces was far lower due to desertions, authorized leave, and attrition.

The Department of Defense Stability and Security Report to Congress for August – November noted that the number of trained and equipped ISF reported by MNF was not the number that would report for duty; “The trained and equipped number should not be confused with present...
duty strength. The number of present for duty soldiers and police is much lower, due to scheduled leave, absence without leave, and attrition.” 631 The report also said that the most significant challenge remaining for ISF was the “reformation of the Ministry of Interior police force and the development of ISF logistics and sustainment capabilities.” 632

The DoD report did say, however, that the President and Maliki had developed a working group to accelerate the training of ISF, Iraqi assumption of operational control, and transfer of security responsibilities to Iraq. As of November 13, 2006, 6 Division Headquarters, 30 Brigade Headquarters, and 91 Iraqi Army battalions had assumed lead for counter-insurgency operations within their assigned areas of operations. Of these, however, “most still required substantial logistics and sustainment support from Coalition forces. Of the MOI’s National Police’s 27 authorized battalions, 5 are in the lead; of brigade headquarters, 1 is in the lead.” As of October 2006, MNF-I had handed of 52 of its 110 Forward Operating Bases to Iraqi authorities. 633

In late September, the US informed Iraq’s Interior Minister that the Iraqi police would lose vital US aid unless action was taken against human rights violators. The US was investigating violations of the Leahy Law, which prohibits the US from financing security forces committing “gross violations of human rights.”

The incident under investigation was the ISF run prison in eastern Baghdad known as Site 4. In May, a joint US and Iraqi inspection of Site 4 found evidence of abuse and torture. UN officials said that 52 arrest warrants were issued, but none were carried out. Iraqi Interior Minister Bolani said that he had not taken further actions because he had not “received written confirmation that indictments had been handed up.” Ambassador Khalilzad said that the Iraqi government had been notified of the investigation, but that he was sure the interior ministry would take whatever action was necessary to avoid violations of the Leahy Law. 634

The civil war also made training Iraqi army and police recruits much more difficult for US troops. In efforts to create trust between civilians and Iraqi forces, US forces put a greater effort into screening new recruits than in the past. However, US trainers spent more time eliminating recruits with militia links than training accepted Iraqis, according to a Newsweek article. At the US base adjacent to Sadr City, nicknamed the “Alamo,” three-quarters of 750 new army recruits were from Sadr City, making the likelihood of Mahdi Army membership extremely high. In October the US detained an Iraqi training officer who “borrowed” two humvees and seven Iraqi troops for an unauthorized sectarian attack in Baghdad’s Mansour district. An American intelligence officer at Alamo base said, “Everything we’ve worked for to give people freedoms is rolled back by the militias.” 635

Coalition forces across Iraq found that the security situation rapidly deteriorated soon after most transfers of authority to US troops. A USA Today article stated that on September 20, US forces handed over control to ISF in Saba Al-Bor. The US trained and equipped 150-man Iraqi force in the mixed Sunni and Shi’ite town was expected to easily monitor the relatively passive area. But two weeks after the US pulled out Sunni insurgents hit Saba Al-Bor with 44 mortars, provoking a strong response from Shi’ite militias flocking to the town. The violence prompted the US army to return only 15 days after they left. US troops said that they found 42 bodies within their first day and that roughly 45,000 of the town’s 60,000 residents had fled. The Iraqi police chief fled when the insurgents attacked, and the new chief said he could only account for 24 of the 150 policemen. US troops took heavy casualties as they tried to stop sectarian death squads from bringing the civil war to another town. 636
Militia infiltration reached an unprecedented level in the early fall and US troops faced major problems in relying on their Iraqi trainees. The Washington Post reported that in October, police at the Sholeh station ambushed and killed a US soldier. Capt. Alexander Shaw, head of the police transition team that oversaw training of Iraqi forces in western Baghdad said, “How can we expect ordinary Iraqi to trust the police when we don’t even trust them not to kill our own men?” He added, “To be perfectly honest, I’m not sure we’re ever going to have police here that are free of the militia influence.” The Sholeh police were suspected of having ties with the Mahdi Army. Capt. Shaw suspected that 70% of Iraqi police were infiltrated by militias. Even the Iraqi chief of police in western Baghdad agreed; “None of the Iraqi police are working to make their country better. They’re working for the militias or to put money in their pocket.”

The station commander at the Ghazaliyah patrol police station was well known by Iraqi and American troops as a member of the Mahdi Army. According to the Washington Post article, the commander refused to acknowledge that he had ties with the militia, and he even denied that there had been killings in the area; tortured bodies were found in the neighborhood on an almost daily basis. Lt. Cadetta Bridges of the US Army said of the Iraqi police, “This guy is a crook and a liar. They’re all crooks and liars.” Shaw and Bridges were visiting Iraqi police stations and discussing ways that police could reduce the violence. A police chief in Mansour responded to the US inquiry with pessimism; “There is nothing the police can do. The only solution is to create a government that will take away the militias.”

There were reports of ISF officers refusing to cooperate with militias and trying to work for a united Iraq. But these officers came under severe pressure by the fall of 2006 – because militias targeted them or intimidated them into complacency. These police and their American trainers were finding it increasingly difficult to see the light at the end of the tunnel at the end of 2006. The Post article cited a police officer in Dora who said that all he did every day was pick up bodies off the street. Many Iraqi officers trying to fight the militias were afraid to return home at night and slept in the police stations. And the training process was further complicated when US trainers could not determine whether they were training police or militiamen.637 This blurred situation confounded US efforts and as the “year of the police” came to a close, it brought into question the number of trained policemen who operated free from militia allegiance.

The Washington Post quoted articles published in Military Review that also questioned the loyalty of ISF. The Post reported Lt. Col. Carl Grunow as writing that Iraqi units drop in number by 20% after paydays because Iraqi soldier must take the time to travel to their hometowns and distribute the money among family member. He said that up to 40% of Iraqi soldiers do not stay and fight in dangerous situations, and go largely unpunished. Another problem was that when a member of the ISF was injured, his comrades would fire all their ammunition in the general direction of the attack, opening up the possibility for severe collateral damage.638

Even so, senior US military officers remained optimistic in their public reports of the progress of ISF. Major General Joseph Peterson, head of the Civilian Assistance Training Team, said that the progress since the fall of 2005 was considerable; “A year ago we had a situation where a police station was attacked, and policemen were running out the backdoor leaving all the equipment. That does not occur anymore. Our policemen are more confident.” He also said that 12,000 Iraqi policemen had been wounded since September 2004 and 4,000 killed. Police forces continued to experience heavy casualties at the end of 2006, making the goal of 325,000 men difficult to obtain. By the end of October, roughly 312,000 forces were trained and equipped, but not all.
were operational. Ambassador Khalilzad and General Casey also announced that Iraqi leaders would decide on a timetable by the end of 2006 to take over full security control, although Prime Minister Maliki disavowed the statement.

General Caldwell, MNF-Iraq spokesman, said that al-Maliki was moving to create new ISF headquarters with units that could be easily moved around the country. Maliki also authorized the addition of 30,000 troops to the Iraqi Army, said Caldwell. He added that at the end of October, there were six Iraqi division headquarters, 30 brigades, and 91 battalions in the lead.

Transferring control to Iraqi forces was also hampered by logistic problems. The Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction said in a report in late October that the US military had not properly tracked weapons given to ISF. The military did not record the serial numbers of the almost 500,000 weapons provided to Iraqis. The weapons included “rocket-propelled grenade launchers, assault rifles, machine guns, shotguns, semiautomatic pistols, and sniper rifles.”

Furthermore, of the semiautomatic pistols purchased and stored in Iraqi warehouses, roughly 13,000 were unaccounted for, and the military has no way of tracking them. The military also failed to provide Iraqis with spare parts and maintenance for their weapons. And military officials said that they could not provide information on the numbers of Iraqi logistics officers trained because of a computer crash that erased records. The US military acknowledged the shortcomings and stated that they had begun tracking weapon serial numbers in mid-2006.

On November 6, the Interior Ministry officially charged 57 employees with human rights crimes for their roles in the Site 4 abuses. They included 20 commissioned officers, 20 non-commissioned officers, and 17 policemen and civilians. The accused would face criminal trials in upcoming months and all were dismissed from their MOI jobs. UN officials said the charges were positive steps for the Iraqi government and that they hoped investigations into other human rights abuses would follow. Army Maj. Gerald Ostlund, a US spokesman on ISF training, said, “This is one step of many [Jawad al-Bolani] needs to take in this direction,” but he added, “You fire somebody from the government here, what have you turned them into? What have they become the day after? Sometimes it is better to keep your enemies closer than your friends.”

The September – October UN Assistance Mission to Iraq Human Rights Report stated that ISF faced “formidable challenges to [their] professional integrity and reputation as a result of their inability to defend the Iraq population from terrorist, sectarian, or revenge attacks.” The report also contradicted reports by MNF-I and other US government sources that the number of trained and equipped ISF reflected their ability to take over security control. UNAMI noted that “absenteeism is widespread and there are reports that in Kirkuk alone, half of the 5,000 police force and 13,000 Army soldiers, are not reporting to duty at any given time, and many fail to return to duty.”

The UNAMI report, however, did commend the Ministry of Interior for taking steps to increase the diversity of the Public Order Division in Ninawa Province and for dismissing ISF that had conducted sectarian acts of violence.

On November 13, US forces handed over security of part of Baghdad’s volatile southern region to the Iraqi Army. US troops said that the evenly divided Shi’ite/Sunni 6th Iraqi Division was well prepared to take over security in the mostly Sunni area. The local US commander said that the new Iraqi leader, Col. Ali Fadil, was in charge of the most proficient of any Iraqi unit in the
lead. US advisers would remain imbedded with the Iraqi troops and US forces would only be a call away if Fadil needed help.645

The same day US commanders praised the Iraqi 6th Division in Baghdad, other US troops questioned the loyalty of the leader of the Iraqi 5th Division in Baquba. The government chose Brig. Gen. Shakir Hulail Hussein al-Kaabi over the summer to command the army in Diyala Province. Within weeks of his appointment, General Shakir approached his American counterpart with a list of names of people he wanted to arrest, according to the New York Times article. The Iraqi Army took the lead in Diyala in July, but with an average of ten killings a day – up from four in April – the US military postponed a planned October transfer of full operation control.

Shi’ite militias in Baquba and nearby towns grew in the fall and General Shakir did little to stop them, the US troops in the area said. In one incident, Shakir led Iraqi troops to arrest 400 Sunnis during a raid in Baquba. After that sectarian act, US commanders ordered Shakir to clear all operations with them first, a step backwards in the training process. US Col. Jones said, “It seems to be a deliberate attempt to make sure that the Sunnis are unable to organize politically here and represent themselves well in the next round of elections.” Jones said that the Shi’ite control of the police forces was so complete that a Sunni deputy police chief was too scared to go to work.

US commanders were additionally frustrated in Diyala because General Shakir fired several well-trained and nationalistic commanders. Another commander under Shakir called him a “Mahdi Army commander.” Despite the accusations, Shakir was promoted to Major General and a Defense Ministry spokesman said he received no complaints about him.

US troops in Diyala, many of whom headed back to the US in early November after a year long tore, said they were leaving on a “low note,” and that the complete withdrawal of US troops in the ethnically mixed province would mean full-scale civil war.646

The contrast between the success story of the commander of the Iraqi Army 6th division in Baghdad and the sectarianism of the 5th division in Diyala highlighted the frustration facing US troops charged with completing the training of ISF. However, General Abizaid said that the events recounted in the article were probably not “completely accurate.” It appeared in the fall that the rate at which ISF were trained and equipped was insufficient to control the spreading civil war. Sectarian death squads were simply too large and pervasive for ISF to control, even with coalition assistance.

MNF-Iraq spokesman Gen. Caldwell said that overall public confidence in Iraqi police was rising at the end of 2006, but that the Ministry of Interior needed more reform. He pointed to efforts by al-Maliki to put Iraqi police units through a “transformational training process, where they will learn how to be more effective leaders and improve their civil policing and collective operational capabilities.” Gen. Caldwell’s assessment, however, was in stark contrast to the frustrating experiences that returning US military advisors recounted.

In late November the Washington Post further reported on the deteriorating training efforts in Iraq – which diverged from the optimistic rhetoric of MNF-I. The article cited internal army documents containing interviews with US officers involved in the training process. Officers criticized almost every aspect of the training process and said that the US army did not support them while they were in Iraq.
The most common complaint of US military advisors was that the Army did little to prepare them for their mission. Others said that team members often lacked experience and training and thus were insufficiently prepared to help with the mission. The unavailability of interpreters was also a widespread problem and sometimes the interpreters did not speak sufficient English. An advisor in 2004, Maj. Robert Dixon, said that he did not have any interpreters at all. According to the article, there was no standardized rubric for advisers to follow and most of them had to feel their way through the process by trial and error.

Iraqi officers interviewed also complained that their US advisors were junior to them and lacked combat experience. A review at the US military’s Center for Army Lessons Learned concluded, “Numerous teams have lieutenants… to fill the role of advisor to an Iraqi colonel counterpart.” A US advisor said that sometimes advisors would call their Iraqi counterparts from the forward operating bases instead actively training them.

Lt. Col. Paul Yingling, a staff officer who helped train Iraqis in 2005 and 2006, said, “The thing the Army institutionally is still struggling to learn is that the most important thing we do in counterinsurgency is building host-nation institutions, yet all our organizations are designed around the least important line of operations: combat operations.”649 At the end of 2006 the advisor training effort was starting to get the attention and status it deserved as the US military addressed sectarianism in the police and the overall inability of the ISF to take over security operations. However, all of the defects in the training process led to the problem that at the end of 2006, only a fraction of the Iraqi forces that had been trained and equipped were actually operational and effective.

Even so, General Abizaid said in a hearing with the Senate Armed Services Committee on November 15, “It is clear that [US commanders and Iraqi leaders] believe Iraqi forces can take more control faster, provided we invest more manpower and resources into the coalition military transition teams, speed the delivery of logistics and mobility enablers, and embrace an aggressive Iraqi-led effort to disarm illegal militias.” He added that “capable and independent” Iraqi forces would set the conditions for withdrawal of US combat forces. Senator Warner (R-VA) questioned General Abizaid further about the abilities of ISF and Abizaid responded, “I have confidence that the Iraqi army is up to the job, providing the Iraqi government shows the confidence in its own army and gives support to its own army to take the lead the way that they should… This has yet to be demonstrated.”650

The statement underscored the differences between the US military’s approach to dealing with armed militias and al-Maliki’s political solution - and what the US military perceived as the Prime Minister’s lack of support for Iraqi military operations in Sadr City. Later in the briefing, General Abizaid said that he expected al-Maliki to move against the Mahdi Army using the Iraqi Army.

In addition, Abizaid said, “command-and-control arrangements are adequate for the current period, but they must be codified as we move ahead with Iraqi units taking more and more leadership in combat operations… I think we need to have some very clear understanding of who moves forward with what types of units, who has the lead.” His statement drew into question whether US forces, Iraqi forces, and the Iraqi government had a clear idea of command structure as the US military transferred control to ISF.
He added later in the briefing that there needed to be more effective Iraqi troops rather than more American troops, at least in November 2006. The US military advised increased embedding of US training teams into the 91 Iraqi battalions in the lead. Further, General Abizaid said that US military commanders were discussing how to increase the pace of transition to ISF, but General Casey, commander of US forces in Iraq, had previously said that the process would take roughly 12 to 18 months to complete.

Abizaid remained confident in the overall ability of Iraqi troops, but recognized weaknesses; “I think that sometimes here in the US we tend to believe that every Iraqi unit’s not doing their duty. That’s not true. Most Iraqi units are doing their duty. Most Iraqi units are going into the field and fighting for their country. No doubt there are difficulties in some Iraqi units, and in the national police there’s more difficulties.” He said that one of the most difficult tasks in training Iraqi forces stemmed from the fact that Shi’a had long looked to militias for protection and support and that it took time to change that way of thinking.

Lawmakers close to Prime Minister Maliki said that he wanted increased control over ISF, particularly in Baghdad. But the US Joint Chiefs of Staff announced in late November that two or three battalions of American troops were being sent to Baghdad from elsewhere in Iraq – possibly Mosul. After meeting with President Bush in Jordan, al-Maliki said that ISF would be able to take over control of security by June 2007.

The Prime Minister’s assertion, however, was sharply called into question in the fall as it became obvious that ISF lacked the training, equipment, and force numbers they needed to take control of the volatile security crisis. Even the most capable of Iraqi Army forces, the 9th Mechanized Division, demonstrated that they still needed the support of US forces in combat.

A joint US-Iraqi raid in Baghdad’s Sunni Fadhil District turned into an ambush by some 100 insurgents, and the 9th Division crumbled under fear and pressure. US troops acknowledged that the fighting was tough and the insurgent’s attacks were coordinated, but Iraqi troops either froze or fired their weapons wildly. The raid had originally been planned as an Iraqi-led operation, but US soldiers said that they took over within minutes.

US troops said that some Iraqi soldiers refused to move into the buildings when the insurgent attacks came or they started firing at will towards friend and foe. Some ISF jumped into their trucks and tried to back away. Both US and Iraqi soldiers acknowledged significant collateral damage. In the end, US and Iraqi troops killed 20 insurgents and detained 43, but the result would clearly have been different without the US soldiers.

Further, an American advisor said that the 9th Division had at most 68% of its force at any given time. US commanders acknowledged that more preparation time would have significantly helped ISF, who only had three hours notice. Yet the incident drew into question the ability of ISF to stay and fight when challenged.

The US military planned to significantly increase the advisor effort in early 2007. At the end of 2006, some 3,500 US advisors were operating inside Iraqi Army and police units, but several thousand more were expected to join in the effort. The military said that the number of advisors in Iraq could triple or quadruple. US commanders were training officers already in Iraq to take on the advisor role so as to not overstretch the army any further. An advisor team leader said, “[Advisors] will have to come from resources in the country. As you stand up the teams, you stand down the combat units.” Pentagon officials said that the end goal was to create teams

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of 20-30 advisors for each Iraqi battalion. The Iraq Study Group recommended increasing the number of embedded US troops to 10,000 – 20,000 from the 3,000 – 4,000 involved at the end of 2006, and advised that they be the most “highly qualified” US officers and military personnel. The training and equipping should be completed by the first quarter of 2008, the panel advised.

The Study Group also recommended transferring the Iraqi National Police and Border Police to the Ministry of Defense so that police commando units would become part of the Iraqi Army. The Facilities Protection Services – heavily infiltrated by Shi’ite militias – should be brought under a reformed Ministry of the Interior.

Under the new advisement plan, teams of 20 to 25 men would be broken off of major units and sent to advise the Iraqi army and some police units. The advisers would spend more time with lower level troops than they were able to before the increase. The Wall Street Journal reported that al-Maliki wanted to increase the size of the Iraqi Army by 40,000 troops, for a total of 170,000. Yet, Former Defense Secretary William Perry and member of the Iraq Study Group said, “Can I assure anyone that we won’t end up training an Iraqi army that ends up fighting other or turns against itself. No I can’t.”

Returning advisers also said that the increase might not have a large effect before the corruption problem of commanders who had support of the Ministry of Defense. Col. David Coffey – returned from a ten month long training stint – highlighted the problems of the American advising program; “There is tremendous pressure on the training teams to show steady progress in the abilities of the Iraqi battalions. This ignores the fact that many units actually get worse as key leaders are killed or go AWOL, as unit equipment degrades, as the enemy situation gets worse, or as combat operations prevent ongoing training.”

The US 1st Infantry Division was pulled out of combat rotation so that soldiers to attend a 60-day training program on how to advise Iraqi forces, but some troops were reassigned without additional training. The US also said they would focus on cultural awareness and hands-on work with weapons in the advisor training process. The question remained, however, if additional US advisors without much field experience could turn the Iraqi forces – infiltrated by militias and with questionable loyalties – into a capable force.

The US military said that in the new advising teams about half of the members had previous deployments in the Middle East, which would help with “cultural awareness.” Commanders said that they were trying to increase the number of Iraqi linguists and that subsequent advisers would get more “cultural awareness” training, but that was the number one thing that deployed soldiers requested.

Lt. Gen. Dempsey stated that the Iraqi army lost roughly 1,000 per month due to attrition and desertion. There was evidence, however, that 1,700 soldiers who had previously disappeared in Anbar Province returned when they learned that conditions were improving.

On November 22, British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett announced that Britain could hand over control of the southern Basra and Maysan Provinces in early 2007. The Province of Najaf was scheduled to be handed over to Iraqi forces in December 2006.

Iraq’s National Security Adviser Mowaffak al-Rubaie said in mid-December that al-Maliki had presented President Bush with a plan for Iraq to have primary responsibility for ISF by early
2007. He said, “I think it is extremely important [US troops] reduce their visibility and they reduce their presence. They should be in the suburbs within greater Baghdad.”

Al-Maliki proposed that Iraq would have direct command of the two Iraqi divisions in Baghdad within a few months. The divisions would also be reinforced by two brigades – primarily composed of Kurds – from Sulaimaniya and Erbil. Mr. Ruhaie added that the training and equipping of the extra forces would proceed ahead of schedule. ISF in Baghdad would focus on seven neighborhoods and impose checkpoints, although fewer than joint US-Iraqi teams opposed in 2006.

US troops would withdraw to the periphery of the capital to stop insurgents and bombers from entering the city limits. The proposal did allow for some American troops to stay embedded with ISF to advise them. Mr. Ruhaie concluded, “We have to stand alone. We have to wean ourselves off the coalition and make our own mistakes and learn from our own mistakes.” Sunni politicians, upon hearing the proposal, expressed alarm, but said they did not suspect the US to comply and pull troops out of Baghdad because the US military knew Shi’ite militias would take over.665

In a speak at the United States Institute of Peace on December 14, 2006 Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi stated that militia infiltration of ISF had to be addressed before other security problems could be solved. He advocated calling back members of the Old Iraqi Army to adequately represent all sectarian groups in the armed forces. He said that the US had to be involved in “watering down” militia elements because the US had chosen and trained the heavily Shi’ite security forces and was responsible for disbanding the Old Army. The US military needed to set a conditional timeline for withdrawal, he said. He believed that if the coalition left in December 2006 militias would control Iraq chaos would erupt, but if US led forces stayed until they had reincorporated members of the Old Army and purged sectarian components – leaving ISF equipped, trained, and loyal to a united Iraq – then it would be time for US withdrawal.

The ability of ISF to take over was doubtful at the end of 2006. Iraqi police forces were not trusted by Sunnis and some Shi’ites and the Iraqi army did not have the force strength or training to secure the country. The Iraq Study Group quoted a senior American general who summed up the US police training efforts; “2006 was supposed to be ‘the year of the police’ but it hasn’t materialized that way.”666 And Gen. Chiarelli stated, “The Year of the Police is going to take us longer than we thought it was going to take us.”667

It remained very easy to buy police uniforms in Baghdad, according to an Iraqi Department of Defense spokesman. He said that vendors sold them at the markets, making it easy for militias to buy and use them to confuse Iraqi civilians.668

On December 16, 2006 al-Maliki invited members of the Old Iraqi Army to join the new security forces. He said, “The new Iraqi army has opened its doors to the members of the former army, whether officers or enlisted men.” Maliki added that those who had committed crimes would not be considered. He made the announcement during a National Reconciliation Conference in Baghdad. He had previously offered employment to lower level members of Hussein’s army, but the new invitation was more far-reaching and appeared to be aimed at incorporating more Sunnis into the ISF.669

On December 20, 2006 US forces handed over provincial control of Najaf Province to Iraq, making it the third province to be transferred. The original target goal for Iraqi security forces
(ISF), 325,000, was reached by the end of 2006, but many had deserted, were on unauthorized leave, were not operational, or had died in the violence. Maliki had previously authorized the addition of at least 30,000 Iraqi forces.

Colonel Miska of the First Infantry Division told the *New York Times* about the most difficult problems he faced in training Iraqi Security Forces. He believed, “Everyone, to some extent, is influenced by the militias. While some Iraqi security forces may be complicit with militias, others fear for their families when confronting the militia, and that is the more pervasive threat.”

Miska said that one of the primary problems was that the Iraqi army answered to the Ministry of Defense and the police answered to the Ministry of Interior and the Facilities Protection Service (FPS) did not really answer to anybody. His main goal was to try and establish some kind of unity of command on the battlefield. He described the situation as “an orchestra where everybody is playing a different song.”

US forces in Anbar Province said that leadership among enlisted Iraqis in the army was lacking. US marines said that performance fell dramatically after a roadside bomb killed a much-respected Iraqi sergeant. A US trainer said that the enlisted men were very reliant on one or two strong leaders and did not have a “broad based approach to decision making.” Marines also said that information was sometimes withheld from the Iraqi army on joint patrols because of the fear that soldiers would tell insurgents.

Further, the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq Human Rights Report for November – December said, “Iraqi law enforcement institutions are marred by corruption and increasing internal and sectarian divisions. Iraqi police are seen as having being infiltrated by or colluding with militias, insurgency and political parties, depending on the area where they operate.”

Police forces, especially the regular police, continued to be accused of supporting militia components. Iraqi police were not trusted by Sunnis and some Shi’ites and the Iraqi army did not have the force strength or training to secure the country. The Iraq Study Group quoted a senior American general who summed up the US police training efforts; “2006 was supposed to be ‘the year of the police’ but it hasn’t materialized that way.” Gen. Chiarelli stated, “The Year of the Police is going to take us longer than we thought it was going to take us.”

The *Washington Post* reported in late December that Iraqi officials were working on efforts to reform the Iraqi police forces and weed out the roughly 25% of policemen though to have ties with militias, according to US Lt. Gen. Martin Dempsey. In a Pentagon news conference, Dempsey said, “My message to you is that Iraq is reaching out to take control of its own security.” He also said that for the most part, Iraqi policemen did not support sectarian violence, but the exception was the national police.

On 22 December nearly 1,000 British troops carried out a dawn raid in Basra to seize an Iraqi police chief accused of sectarian attacks. A British military spokesman said, “The purpose of this raid is not just to apprehend this individual, but it is the precursor to disbanding the Serious Crimes Unit of the Basra police.” There was evidence that the police chief was involved in the 29 October death of 17 employees of a British-run police training academy.

Three days later a combined British and Iraqi force of 1,400 again raided the police station and razed it to the ground. Troops killed seven gunmen and rescued 127 prisoners being held by the Serious Crimes Unit in Basra. The British military said that most prisoners showed signs of torture and were held in very poor conditions.
Basra’s police chief condemned the raid, but residents in Basra privately told the *New York Times* that they welcomed the end of the Unit because it was widely infiltrated by militias and used terrorist tactics. Policemen belonging to the Serious Crimes Unit attacked British and Iraqi forces as they moved through Basra in the pre-dawn raid, but troops faced little resistance as they reached the police station. The prisoners were handed over to the regular Iraqi police in Basra.677

The US military did announce that December 2006 was a very successful recruiting month for police forces in Anbar; 1,115 men signed up, 600 in Ramadi alone. MNF-Iraq spokesman Maj. Gen. William Caldwell said that this was a significant improvement from zero recruits at the beginning of 2006. He did, however, put the numbers in perspective; “There are still significant shortcomings in the Iraqi security forces. Iraqi security forces suffer from deficiencies in logistics, leaderships, and in some cases loyalty. That is why the multinational force is consistently and continuously reassessing and strengthening how we train, advise and assist the Iraqi forces.”678

In Ramadi US and Iraqi forces faced terrorist attacks on an almost daily basis. Police stations had been attacked twice in recent weeks, with Iraqi forces fighting back, Army officials said. Yet in early January Iraqi army and police forces conducted house-to-house searches for terrorists for the first time on their own, with only US logistics and communication help.

US marines stayed behind to finish the construction of the Ramadi police outpost, a 2000 sq. feet structure due to be completed on January 7. U.S. Army Lt. Col. Miciotto Johnson, the task force commander, said the operation would be a turning point for the Tamim neighborhood in Ramadi because it would provide a police station for the first time. Further, the Iraqi police provided security for a local university, and Ramadi General Hospital, once virtually abandoned, had hundreds of patients and some schools opened for the first time in months. The progress was slow and casualties on both sides remained high, but US forces were encouraged.679

Equipment also presented serious problems. On 16 December, 2006, the US military said that it was seeking a contractor to provide armor for 1,300 SUVs used by the Iraqi National Police. In the previous two years many Iraqi policemen were killed or wounded by small arms fire and IEDs while operating in their US-issued vehicles. The US received complaints throughout the training process that ISF were underequipped.680

The US military recognized the need to rein in the Facilities Protection Service and announced an initiative to control the 150,000 member ministerial guard force. The Iraq Study Group described the force as having “questionable loyalties and capabilities.” Many FPS troops were employed by the Health Ministry – controlled by Sadr – and were believed to members of the Mahdi Army. The Department of Defense report, “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq”, said there was only “anecdotal evidence” that the FPS was incapable, but the evidence seemed to point to widespread corruption and sectarian loyalties.

Al-Maliki announced in August 2006 that the FPS would be consolidated and brought under the wing of the Interior Ministry, and that process finally began in early 2007. Lt. Gen. Dempsey, US Commander of the Multinational Security Transition Command in Iraq, said that he would work closely with the MOI to make sure the FPS was brought under control.681

US officials and commanders still issued plans for the quick handover of security to Iraqis, particularly in Baghdad, but neither the Americans nor the Iraqis had enough troops to combat the rising level of violence and engage in substantial training efforts. Within the training effort,
the US shifted from a strategy of building up the Iraqi police to address internal security concerns to beefing up the Iraqi Army, which was more trusted and less sectarian than the police.\footnote{682}

President Bush repeated this theme in his speech on the new strategy for Iraq on January 10, “We will help the Iraqis build a larger and better-equipped army, and we will accelerate the training of Iraqi forces, which remains the essential US security mission in Iraq.” He also restated the increased adviser mission of US embeds with the Iraqi security forces. The new strategy for Baghdad was to be led by roughly 18 Iraqi Army and National Police Brigades, the President said. The readiness of the Iraqi brigades, however, was unclear and US troops would most likely lead the majority of the offensives.\footnote{683}

On January 17 Prime Minister Maliki stated that Iraq’s reliance on US forces would fall in three to six months if America accelerated the process of equipping Iraqi security forces. He also said that many American and Iraqi lives would have been saved if the US had properly equipped ISF in previous years. An aide to the Prime Minister said that the Iraqi leader wanted heavier weapons because the weaponry of militias and insurgents was superior to that of the ISF.

In answers to advance questions from the Senate Armed Services Committee before his nomination hearing, Lt. Gen. David H. Petraeus emphasized the importance of US military and police transition teams:\footnote{684}

There is an unquestionable linkage between ISF progression and the embedded transition team program. Despite the success achieved by the embedding of transition teams, the current Military Transition Team size is insufficient to meet all operational requirements and permit an optimum level of support. The commander of MNC-Iraq has initiated a plan to enhance MTTs to increase their effectiveness. Based on conditions within each multi-national division area of responsibility, primarily relating to levels of violence and ISF capacity for independent operations, MTTs are being augmented by assets controlled by their respective MND Commanders. US brigade combat teams are the primary resource providers for these enhancements. Enhanced MTTs have the ability to advise ISF units down to the company level...

The current size, structure, and number of Police Transition Teams is appropriate for the mission they are assigned. There are three different types of PTTs: station, district, and provincial. The nucleus of all PTTs is a military police squad with additional US Army personnel added at the district and professional level...

Throughout Iraq, the enhancement of the baseline MTTs will continue based on an assessment of the security situation in each MND Area of Responsibility. The estimate provided to me by the MNF-I staff is that it will take 6-12 months to move to enhanced MTTs throughout Iraq. Continuing and expanding the transition team program over time will energize ISF progression and eventually facility a change in relationship as the embedded transition teams move more toward the advising role and less toward mentoring or even, to a degree, leading...

The current ration of PTTs at the station, district, and provincial levels is adequate, but we also need to relocate some PTTs from provinces that have moved to Provincial Iraqi Control to provinces that have not achieved PIO. International Police Liaison Officers (IPLO) and interpreters are absolutely essential to successful PTT operations. MNC-I continues to have difficulty recruiting and fielding new interpreters; additional emphasis and incentives need to be established to retain the qualified interpreters we currently employ. Additionally, if the IPLO program is ended too soon, the lack of this law enforcement expertise and experience would have a significant and adverse impact. A recommendation for making the IPLO program even better is to recruit law enforcement experts from other Middle Eastern nations (such as Jordan, Egypt, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia etc) into the program.
Reconstruction efforts were hampered by the security crisis and the lack of and misuse of funding. Reconstruction only began to receive the attention it deserved in mid 2006, but by that point the security crisis prevented significant progress. Economic growth in 2006 hit 4% - well below the 10% goal – inflation lingered around 50%, and unemployment averaged about 40%, although it reached 60% in Anbar Province.\textsuperscript{685}

At the end of October, ten Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) were operational, according to an audit by the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR). The goal of the PRTs was to “provide grassroots support in the development of nationwide governance capacity in Iraq.” PRTs included personnel from numerous US civilian departments, USAID, MNF-I, and the US Army Corp of Engineers. SIGIR reviewed nine PRTs and found that “four were generally able, four were somewhat able, three were less able, and two were generally unable to carry out their PRT mission.” SIGIR noted that civilian and military personnel were effectively working together and that there were sufficient resources and personnel to meet expectations in 2007.

However, the security crisis deeply confounded the PRTs’ mission. Most importantly, PRT members could not meet face-to-face with their Iraqi counterparts, severely hampering the mentoring that was the core of PRT missions. The PRTs were also expected to suffer from recruiting problems in the future. The security problem was deemed the worst at the PRT offices in Anbar and Basra, and SIGIR suggested putting those missions on hold until the security crisis eased. Finally, SIGIR commended the efforts by the rapidly compiled PRTs and said that efforts on the part of individuals were allowing the teams to move forward with development in some areas.\textsuperscript{686}

A SIGIR audit on reconstruction efforts found that the Baghdad Police College, contracted to Parsons Corp., posed an extreme health and security risk to recruits. Water ran down walls throughout the building and part of it needed to be demolished. Federal auditors monitoring Iraq’s reconstruction looked at the rest of Parson Corp.’s projects and found that 13 of the 14 failed to meet standards. The project had originally been praised for providing much needed employment to Iraqis.\textsuperscript{687} The Army Corp of Engineers was in charge of overseeing the project. Maj. Gen. William McCoy, chief Army engineer for Iraq reconstruction, said that the Corp. did a poor job of monitoring the construction and was investigating the deficiencies.\textsuperscript{688}

A police headquarters building in Mosul was also found to have poor construction. The Army Corp. of engineers contracted directly to an Iraqi construction company in this case, rather than using a middleman like Parsons Corp. Police officers in Mosul specifically asked SIGIR to inspect the building for obvious construction flaws. The Iraqi company had failed to build several of the amenities required in the contract – such as sufficient bathroom facilities and ceiling fans. The builders also cemented a tree trunk into the cement walls of the headquarters.

The Army Corp. was again ridiculed for lack of proper inspection at the beginning of the project. The commander of the Army Corp’s Gulf Region Division, General William McCoy, said he agreed with the assessment, but said the Corps had also found the deficiencies and were taking steps to fix them. The Corps also pointed to a courthouse project in Baghdad that the inspectors said was successful.\textsuperscript{689}
SIGIR stated that in some cases, overhead costs had consumed up to 55% of a project’s budget. The overhead costs were generally spent on “housing and feeding employees, completing paperwork, and providing security.” The main problem, however, stemmed from the fact that the US hired and sent the contractors to Iraq, but construction did not start on projects for up to nine months. The highest overhead costs were incurred by KBR, a Halliburton subsidiary. The report found that KBR spent over $50 billion in overhead before construction even started, and another $100 billion after the work began.690

SIGIR pointed out several successful development projects. These included the Al Karakh Courthouse, village roads in Thi Qar, a critical care unit at Ibn Al Bitar Hospital, the Baghdad Municipal Solid Waste Landfill, and the Bab Eshtar Substation. These projects were all completed or nearing completion at the end of 2006. However, security problems compromised the use of some of the buildings, particularly the Baghdad landfill, as well as SIGIR’s ability to properly assess progress.691

One US engineering company in Iraq, Bechtel Corp., decided to leave the country due to the security situation. Bechtel Corp. had contracts up to $2.3 million to help rebuild Iraq’s roads, bridges, power-grids, and telephone lines. Bechtel said that it completed most of its reconstruction projects and only two remained incomplete. However, the cost to the company’s employees became too great; 52 of Bechtel’s employees were killed and 49 wounded. Bechtel said that the company had not anticipated working under such violent conditions.692

It was clear that the key to success in Iraqi reconstruction projects was early and frequent inspections and good oversight. However, the Army Corp. and other reconstruction agencies were faced with the challenge of letting Iraqi companies gain valuable experience in rebuilding projects and allowing some deficiencies to occur. Further, the New York Times reported that a military authorization bill passed by President Bush in mid-October included a provision to end SIGIR in October 2007. US legislators said that the termination clause must have been a last minute insertion because they did not see it on any drafts.693 However, several reports noted that once the democrats took control of Congress in November a bill was introduced to extend SIGIR’s mandate.

In remarks to the Senate Armed Service Committee on November 15, David Satterfield, State Department coordinator for Iraq, said that the State Department had increased staffing levels in Baghdad and at provincial reconstruction team outposts. He stated that twice the number of State Department employees was employed at those locations than in 2005. Satterfield also said that qualified officers were steadily volunteering for the dangerous yet crucial posts.694

The Pentagon contended in November that despite the bleak Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction October quarterly report and the fact that a quarter of the $37 billion in UN secured oil money was untraceable, progress on reconstruction in Iraq was significant. Dean Popps, Principal Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology, told the *Washington Times* that the state of infrastructure in Iraq when the Army Corp of Engineers arrived was far worse than they had originally expected. Popps said that three sewage treatments plants in greater Baghdad did not work, only a few towns had a central supply of clean water, the electrical grid was insufficient, and there were few primary health care facilities. Popps cited several successes of the Pentagon’s reconstruction projects in Iraq:695

- Six new primary care facilities, with 66 more under construction; 11 hospitals renovated; more than 800 schools fixed up, more than 300 police stations and facilities and 248 border control forts.
• Added 407,000 cubic meters per day of water treatment; a new sewage-treatment system for Basra; work on Baghdad’s three plants continues; oil production exceeds the 2002 level of 2 million barrels a day by 500,000.

• The Ministry of Electricity now sends power to Baghdad for four to eight hours a day, and ten to twelve for the rest of the country.

MNF-I spokesman Gen. Caldwell also said that in 2006 146 water and sewage projects, 140 educational projects, 57 medical and public health projects, and 37 agricultural projects began. The October quarterly update for the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund (IRRF) highlighted a number of the projects completed in the quarter, but also acknowledged continued challenges. Key progress included the following:

• Completed nine Gas-Oil Separation Plant rehabilitation projects in the south.

• Completed hot gas path inspections of two Siemens V94.2 generators and combustion inspections on two other V94.2 generators at the Baiji Power Station… The increased capacity will provide electrical power to an additional 27,000 homes.

• Significant progress was made in improving the supply of clean potable water and reducing waste discharge.

• Completed construction of Special Police Regiment Facilities in Taji.

• Completed construction of military facilities in Samara, Hammal Al Ali, Taji, and Diwaniya, supporting a total of 2,000 Iraqi soldiers.

• Completed construction of the Ministry of Electricity’s Regional Wireless Communication Network, which provides an internal communications system using microwave and UHF, as well as integrating data and voice communications.

• Completed a series of improvements at the Baghdad International Airport.

The report also said that in the fall of 2006 USAID started a “longer-term, self-sustaining, national capacity development program that focuses on strengthening and expanding Iraq’s existing civil service training institutes in Baghdad and the provinces.”

The report acknowledged the challenges facing reconstruction and development in Iraq, including the security situation and poor oversight by contractors. One of the principal objectives in the next quarter would be completing the Basra Children’s Hospital – which had run well over budget. The report confirmed that work on the Baghdad Police College – found in the early fall to have severe structural deficiencies – was complete.

The emphasis on reconstruction and development in Iraq came about two years late and despite progress in the fall and early winter of 2006, high levels of corruption and the more pressing need for security overshadowed the successes. Moreover, almost all of the funds appropriated to the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund were committed and the trend line for future economic assistance from the US sloped downward. And of the $13.5 billion pledged by international donors for reconstruction, only $4 billion was delivered. As the need for reconstruction projects in Iraq increased, it appeared that economic support faltered.

In his speech on January 10, President Bush announced added reconstruction efforts to support his new strategy:

…To show that it is committed to delivering a better life, the Iraqi government will spend $10 billion of its own money on reconstruction and infrastructure projects that will create new jobs…
We will give our commanders and civilians greater flexibility to spend funds for economic assistance. We will double the number of provincial reconstruction teams. These teams help bring together military and civilian experts to help local Iraqi communities pursue reconciliation, strengthen the moderates, and speed the transition to Iraqi self-reliance. And Secretary Rice will soon appoint a reconstruction coordinator in Baghdad to ensure better results for economic assistance being spent in Iraq...

In a press conference the following day Condoleezza Rice provided further details:

To oversee our economic support for the Iraqi people, and to ensure that it is closely integrated with our security strategy, I have appointed Tim Carney to the new position of coordinator for Iraq Transitional Assistance. He will be based in Baghdad and will work with Iraqi counterparts to facilitate a maximum degree of coordination in our economic and development efforts.

Our decentralization of effort in Iraq will require a more decentralized presence. We must continue to get civilians and diplomats out of our embassy, out of the capital, and into the field, all across the country. The mechanism to do this is the Provincial Reconstruction Team, or PRT. We currently have ten PRTs deployed across Iraq, seven American and three coalition. Building on this existing presence, we plan to expand from 10 to at least 18 teams. For example, we will have six PRTs in Baghdad, not just one. We will go from one team in Anbar province to three – in Fallujah, Ramadi, and al Qaim. These PRTs will closely share responsibilities and reflect an unprecedented unity of civilian and military effort.

Expanding our PRT presence will also enable us to diversify our assistance across all of Iraq. Iraq has a federal government. Much of the street-level authority, and much of the opportunity for positive change in Iraq, lies outside the Green Zone, in local and provincial governments, with party leaders and tribal chiefs. By actively supporting these provincial groups and structures, we diversify our chances of success in Iraq. Our PRTs have had success working at the local level in towns like Mosul, Tikrit, and Tal Afar. Now we will invest in other parts of Iraq, like Anbar province, where local leaders are showing their desire and building their capacity to confront violent extremists and build new sources of hope for their people.

All total, we seek to deploy hundreds of additional civilians across Iraq to help Iraqis build their nation. And we will ask Congress to provide funding to support and secure our expanded civilian presence. We want to give our civilians, deployed in PRTs, the flexibility to devote extra resources where they can do the most good at the local level. Our expanded PRT presence will be a powerful tool to empower Iraq’s reformers and responsible leaders in their struggle against violent extremism. We therefore plan to request, as part of our FY 2007 Supplemental, significant new operating funds for our PRTs, as well as hundreds of million of dollars to fund their programs. When we add in relevant USAID projects, we hope to approximately double our resource commitment to help local Iraqi communities through PRTs.

These commitments will not be indefinite. As I said earlier, one of our main objectives in this phase is to help the Iraqis use their own money to rebuild their country. The Iraqis have budgeted billions of dollars for this mission in 2007, and as their efforts become more effective, we have kept our FY 2008 requests limited. We want Iraqis to rely more and more on their own resources, their own people, and their own efforts. Therefore, by 2008 and 2009, the burden of local assistance should be assumed more effectively by the Iraqi government. In the meantime, though, our efforts will be vital.

These plans were not without promise, but they understated or ignored the massive problems the US had in recruiting the existing PRTs. These delayed the operation of many PRTs until later in 2006 and still left some either inactive or staffed largely with inexperienced personnel and military personnel assigned to duties that required civilian expertise. Only 13 teams were authorized. Only 10 teams were fully operational, with some 170 non-Department of Defense civilians and 180 soldiers, when 18 were needed to have even one per governorate. Auditors found in October 2006 that only four of the 13 teams could actually be effective in their satellite offices, and that massive security and transportation problems severely limited the work of the PRT effort. There were less than 120 non-DoD civilians in place, including support personnel.701

It is also far from clear how quickly the US can act in getting aid into the field; how it can cope with Iraqi corruption, inefficiency, and factionalism; and whether it can time serious aid efforts

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to provide immediate support to its security efforts. Every single major US and Iraqi effort of this kind to date had failed dismally to live up to its promises, and every claim to the contrary had misstated the facts, puffed up minor or temporary successes, or been a lie. Moreover, the US had to suddenly make sudden reversals in its past efforts that focused on long-term projects and major construction and find ways of aiding Iraq’s state industries, effectively dispensing microcapital loans, and dealing with other aid projects that require effective US personnel, and honest and effective Iraqi government personnel, in the field. This had to be done in the areas which were now most violent and which were certain to have serious lingering problems no matter how effective US and Iraqi forces were during the course of 2007.702

Figure II.13 shows the PRT’s classification of readiness of Iraqi provinces. Anbar and Basra provinces were deemed the least ready for Iraqi control, and Baghdad was partially ready. These projections by the PRTs, however, were not based on sufficient evidence and did not reflect the reality on the ground.
**Figure II.13: The Unready Judges the Unready: Provincial Security Transition Team Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Readiness Status</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anbar</td>
<td>Not Ready for Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninewa</td>
<td>Partially Ready for Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahuk</td>
<td>Ready for Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arbil</td>
<td>Ready for Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulamaniyah</td>
<td>Ready for Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamim</td>
<td>Partially Ready for Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salah ad Din</td>
<td>Partially Ready for Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diyala</td>
<td>Partially Ready for Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>Partially Ready for Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karbala</td>
<td>Partially Ready for Transition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Babil</td>
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<tr>
<td>Najaf</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qadisiyah</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muthanna</td>
<td>Provincial Iraqi Control</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dhi Qar</td>
<td>Provincial Iraqi Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maysan</td>
<td>Partially Ready for Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basra</td>
<td>Not Ready for Transition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Problems of Rule of Law and Corruption

Iraq’s political, military, and economic problems interacted with the lack of an affective rule of law and capability of government. The rule of law suffered from overcrowded prisons, insufficient numbers of judges and attorneys who experienced constant threats on their lives, rapidly conducted and inadequate trials, and a lack of communication between US forces, Iraqi forces, and the Iraqi government. The high level of corruption in the government and Ministries provided a poor example to other institutions. Favoritism, nepotism, and mismanagement of money at the local and provincial levels often had sectarian ties and contributed to the control of economic and political space by ethnic groups.

The Pentagon completed a classified assessment of the Iraqi criminal justice system in June 2006 and found that the area in which progress was made was convicting former senior government officials. Yet all other aspects, such as training judges to increasing the number of courts, fell behind schedule. The assessment said, “Iraq’s judiciary is technically independent but unable and unwilling to assert itself or provide a balance to Iraq’s powerful political parties. The criminal justice system is overloaded and lacks the capacity to consistently process those arrested and/or detained.”

The security crisis and lack of resources hindered another one of the idealistic pillars of democracy. A State Department official who tried to create a system to train and pay defense lawyers said her plan was never financed in part because, “judicial planning was dominated by American prosecutors who took a dim view of defense lawyers.” It appeared that the Iraqi criminal justice system posed another reason for Iraqis to distrust their government, and US forces.703

In an interview with The Guardian, Stuart Bowen of SIGIR said that Iraq was in danger of being brought down by a “second insurgency.” Bowen defined the “second insurgency” as smuggling of oil and widespread corruption. The “virtual pandemic” of corruption cost Iraq roughly $4billion a year.704

Additionally, the new government faced serious allegations of corruption. The Washington Post reported that Iraqi officials confirmed that the government was addressing the issue by assigning inspector generals to each ministry to audit finances and expel corrupt officials.705

In late September, the government did take a step toward greater transparency. Mr. Maliki’s government issued arrest warrants for 88 former Iraqi officials wanted on corruption charges. Of the 88, 15 were former ministers – including the former electricity minister, Ayham al-Amarie, former defense minister, Hazam Shaalan, another former electricity minister, Muhsin Shalash, and the ministers of labor, transportation, and housing. The spokesman for the Public Integrity Commission running the investigation said that 61 of the 88 were “living as fugitives abroad.” The commission announced the loss of US $7.5 billion through corruption since 2003.706

In early November corruption watchdog Transparency International rated Iraq in the bottom three most corrupt countries in 2006. TI said that the ongoing violence in Iraq led to the breakdown of “checks and balances, law enforcement and the functioning of institutions like the judiciary and legislature. If all that is under strain the very system that works to prevent corruption is undermined.”707
The level of corruption in Iraq at the end of 2006 was illustrated by the black market for weapons. The October SIGIR report stated that roughly 4% - about 14,000 weapons - were lost in the process of being transferred to Iraqi security forces, none of which the US military had records of. A *New York Times* report, however, offered an even bleaker assessment of the ultimate destination of American weapons.

The 4% reported by SIGIR did not include weapons sold by Iraqi security forces on the black market. The weapons, mostly pistols, often brought more money than several months pay for ISF. Deserters from the police and army sold their weapons on the black market for an increasingly larger price as Sunnis and Shi’a across Iraq armed themselves for widespread civil conflict. ISF also sometimes reported that their weapons were “stolen.”

In either case, US issues weapons were easy to find in black market stores around the country. The demand for weapons resulted in rising prices – pistol prices tripled since 2003 – which in turn offered greater incentive for ISF to sell their weapons on the black market. Rising prices also led to increased raids on US and Iraqi army weapon warehouses. A black market dealer said, “Almost all of the weapons come from the Iraqi police and army. They are our best suppliers.” He added, “In the south, if the Americans give the Iraqis weapons, the next day you can buy them here. The Iraqi army, the Iraqi police – they all sell them right away.”

The weapons black market underscored the problems of US reconstruction and development in Iraq. The rapidly distributed weapons were expected to accelerate the training of ISF, but most pistols ended up in the hands of those fighting US and Iraqi forces, according to the Times article. The US military said that it began tracking serial numbers on weapons sent to Iraq, but it appeared that a large number of the 138,000 Glock pistols and 165,000 Kalashnikov rifles were already in other hands.

The level of corruption in Iraqi ministries was also visible in failure to spend billions of dollars of oil revenues set aside for reconstruction. The failure to spend the money was due to “rapid personnel turnover in government, security woes, endemic corruption and a lack of technocrats skilled at jobs like writing contracts and managing complex projects,” according to the *New York Times*.

The oil minister said that the Finance Ministry taking too long to authorize payments caused part of the problem. American officials, however, said that the strict measures put on Iraqi ministries to stop corruption may have scared many government employees away from putting their own name on a contract.

According to the Oil Ministry, about half of the revenue was intended for repair of oil infrastructure, but little of it was ever spent. Overall, Iraqi ministries spend at least 15% of their 2006 capital budgets for reconstruction. Iraqi-run reconstruction efforts were thus hampered by as many problems as US-led programs.

The Iraq Study Group report agreed that corruption was rampant in Iraq’s government. An Iraqi official told the Group that corruption cost Iraq between $5-7 billion a year. The Report did acknowledge several promising steps: Iraq created a functioning audit board with inspectors general in the ministries, and leaders spoke out against corruption.

The August-November Department of Defense Stability and Security Report stated, “Political stability in Iraq is predicated on achieving the rule of law. The rule of law requires a functional legal code, police to investigate crimes and enforce laws, criminal and civil courts to administer
justice, and prisons to incarcerate offenders.” The Pentagon assessed, however, “Although progress continues, development and implementation of rule of law initiatives has been slow, contributing to crime, corruption, and the proliferations of illegal armed groups. Mistrust between the police forces and the judiciary further hampers progress in the development of the rule of law.”

The report said that the Iraqi Constitution was vague on some rights and freedoms. It also said that within the police forces, “corruption and smuggling are becoming more organized and entrenched,” because there was little emphasis on training and investigating criminal activities. To combat that problem, the Ministry of Interior was planning to add thousands of forensic specialists to the police forces, who would be trained by MNSTC-I.

The Pentagon’s update reported on the many problems in Iraqi courts. The Constitution allowed suspects to see a judge within 24 hours, but that rarely happened due to “an acute shortage of investigative judges, prosecutors, judicial investigators, and trial judges, and systemic inefficiencies, including the lack of cooperation and communication between the police and the judiciary.”

In November 2006, Iraq had 800 investigative and trial judges and 100 courts – not nearly enough for the massive number of detainees. The Iraqi government instituted several training programs to try and increase the number of judges for 2007. The DoD report noted that corruption in the judiciary was less rampant than other areas of the government, but instead the problem was “judicial intimidation and lack of security.” Throughout the insurgency and proceeding civil conflict, judges received threats and were frequently attacked. This intimidation thus led to judges to “fail to report to work, resign from their positions, fear reaching verdicts against powerful defendants, and, in the provinces, decline to investigate and try insurgent and terrorism related cases.” The DoD report called for a judicial security force and a more secure court system that would help the retention rate of judges.

The November Stability and Security Report also said that Ministry of Interior detention facilities in Iraq “are overcrowded, with substandard facilities and poor accountability for persons detained.” Ministry of Defense detention facilities were acceptable, but only housed post-conviction criminals.

As for corruption in the political ministries, the report stated:

Corruption in the ministries had hampered their capabilities. Many of Iraq’s political factions tend to view government ministries and their associated budgets as sources of power, patronage, and funding for their parties. Ministers without strong party ties face significant pressure from political factions and sometimes have little control over the politically appointed and connected people serving under them. This corruption erodes public confidence in the elected government.
The November – December 2006 UN Assistance Mission for Iraq Human Rights report summarized the rule of law in Iraq:

Conditions of detention, including overcrowding and poorly run facilities, as well as lack of judicial oversight remain the main human rights concerns. Many detainees, especially in the south, are kept in facilities that are reportedly not fit for human use. Furthermore, the current number of detainees that need to be brought before a judge continues to outstrip the capacity of the Iraqi criminal courts to adjudicate cases. HRO recognizes the enormous challenges faced by the Iraqi judiciary, especially in the current security context. The work of the judiciary is further hampered by the repeated disregard of judicial orders by the police and by the constant threats and actual killing of judges which calls into question the independence of the judiciary and the genuine commitment by the authorities to develop a State based on the rule of law.

The *New York Times* reported on that a severe lack of judges and prosecution lawyers and a hastily compiled court system were the basis of the problem. The Times stated, “Almost every aspect of the judicial system is lacking, poorly serving not just detainees but also Iraqi citizens and troops trying to maintain order.”

Lawyers assigned by the court to represent Iraqi and US held detainees met their defendants only minutes before trials began. Judges often ignored requests by lawyers to present arguments – in the cases that lawyers knew what crime the defendant had allegedly committed. An American lawyer said that in the 100 cases he tried, none of the defense attorneys had presented evidence or witnesses. Trials lasted fifteen minutes on average as judges attempted to reduce the numerous detainee population. Since 2003, the US held about 61,500 prisoners and at the end of 2006 held 14,000, but only 3,000 has been charged and tried in Iraqi courts. No numbers were available on Iraqi held detainees.

Iraqi judges sometimes handed out severe sentences for when defendants had no time to call witnesses or talk with their lawyers. In 2006, judges committed 14 American held detainees to death by hanging. US forces, however, complained that the Iraqi government requested the release of tens of thousands of detainees – 6% of whom the US recaptured in other criminal acts. According to the *Times* article, the Iraqi courts acquitted roughly half of the defendants at the end of 2006, but it was often because of “political interference, and threats from militants” on judges’ lives. However, in about 4% of cases, the US did not release detainees who had been acquitted by Iraqi courts because they remained a “serious threat.”

The US military responded by trying to acquire better evidence at crime scenes. US soldiers turned detectives used forensic evidence and photography to better present cases against alleged criminals. Yet individuals were often mass arrested at crime scenes and put into the overcrowded detention facilities where it took weeks to release those who had simply been at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Miscalculation of government funds and corruption continued to be serious problems. In early January the *Los Angeles Times* acquired the proposed 2007 Iraqi budget. The *Times* reported that nearly $2 billion was allocated to agencies “beyond the oversight of the central government.” Iraqi officials also said that most Ministries got millions in funds called “social benefits” that had few spending safeguards. Further, the draft called for cuts to the Public Integrity Commission - which investigated corruption – by 13%.
The most contentious issue in the budget – and one that Sunni lawmakers refused to accept – was the allocation of $230 million to victims of the Hussein government. Yet the budget only planned to spend $6 million on victims of internal displacement, a figure which the UN put at 1.8 million.

The budget did include an increase of 60% to funds for improving the country’s infrastructure and 50% for Health and Education. The largest chunk of the total budget was allocated to Iraqi security forces. The Sunni controlled Defense Ministry would receive roughly the same amount as in 2006 -- $4 billion – despite planned personnel increases and the need for equipment. Funds to the Shi'ite controlled Interior Ministry, however, would increase 25% to $2 billion.

The entire 2007 budget was 21% larger than the previous year’s, an increase that raised questions by even the Prime Minister’s closest allies, the Times reported. In addition, the total figure did not include the extra $8 billion that Ministries failed to spend in 2006 on reconstruction projects and funds from the international community. The budget, like other key issues, reflected sectarianism and little evidence of compromise. Sunnis were unlikely to vote for the proposal in its current draft form.

**Economic Indicators**

Sectarian and other violence had economic causes as well. Lt. Gen. Peter W. Chiarelli said in December 2006, “We need to put the angry young men to work. One of the key hindrances to us establishing stability in Iraq is the failure to get the economy going. A relatively small decrease in unemployment would have a very serious effect on the level of sectarian killing going on.” The task force hoped that reopening the factories after three years of desertion would bring young men off the streets and help reduce violence.

The Pentagon’s November report on Stability and Security in Iraq agreed, “High unemployment continued to feed sectarian, insurgents, and criminal activity.” For the first time, the report supported US-Iraqi initiatives to create jobs in a non-sectarian manner; “Efforts to address unemployment and underemployment must be viewed as a top United States and Iraqi priority and be appropriately funded.”

The DoD report did mention Iraqi efforts of economic reform, such as raising gas prices and passing the Fuel Import Liberalization Law and the Investment Law. The International Monetary Fund indicated that non-oil GDP growth would be 10% in 2006. On October 31, 2006 members of the International Compact finalized the compact and expected full approval. The compact had the potential to foster international investment in Iraq, but would most likely take several years to have a visible effect. However, “the Government of Iraq faces serious challenges in the economic sector and has made only incremental progress in economic reform and execution of its own budget and programs.”

Inflation – caused by “disruptions in the supply of food and fuel, price deregulation, spending by the Government of Iraq and donors, and growth of the money supply - was one of the key indicators preventing economic recovery in Iraq, said the DoD. According to Iraq’s Organization for Statistics and Information Technology, the annual inflation from October 2005 to October 2006 was 53%. The report added, “It is widely believed that the official inflation rate underestimates the actual inflation rate.”

The central bank did take some steps to curb inflation.
• The bank raised interest rates from 7% to 12%, but the weak banking sector and the significant influence of the dollar rendered this move largely symbolic.

• The bank also slowly appreciated the dinar. The exchange rate is now approximately 1,455 Iraqi dinar to US$1. However, a much faster rate of appreciation will be necessary to fight inflation.

In December the Pentagon announced plans to reinvigorate Iraq’s economy by creating jobs in many of the country’s violence torn cities. The Pentagon team hoped to reestablish nearly 200 state owned factories that had closed down after the departure of the CPA. The businesses could potentially employ 11,000 Iraqis by the new year. The task force was also searching for US businesses to invest.

In mid-January the Pentagon looked into the option of restarting old Iraqi state-owned business during the Saddam era in order to create jobs and help the economy. For example, the New York Times reported that there was a ceramics factory near Ramadi virtually undamaged and with new equipment that could easily be restarted. The Iraqi government estimated that there were 192 state owned industries, outside of security and energy, which had been closed or neglected since 2003.

State owned enterprises were shunned by the Coalition Provincial Authority in hopes that free markets would fill the void. But the security crisis deterred most foreign investors and although cheaper goods from outside could be found in markets in Iraqi cities, unemployment averaged 40%. The idea had the backing of senior Pentagon official Paul Brinkley, but had not received official support.720

In answers to advance policy questions before his nomination hearing with the Senate Armed Services Committee on January 23, 2007, Gen. David Petraeus expanded on the future of state owned industries:721

When the Task Force to Improve Business and Stability Operations-Iraq (TF BSO) arrived in Iraq, it expected to find a Soviet style, aging State owned enterprise (SOE) industrial base that was grossly uncompetitive. First hand evaluations, however, reveal that some of these factories possess modern – even automated – equipment, and are capable of producing materials and manufactured goods that would be competitive in both Iraqi and world markets. Some facilities have deteriorated or suffered from a lack of recapitalization, and require varying amounts of refurbishment. Other SOEs are simply obsolete, either because they produce materials or finished goods for which there is little or no demand, or because they require cost-prohibitive investment prior to restarting operations. SOEs traditionally employ large numbers of Iraqis. Their closure still requires that the Government of Iraq address manpower costs, principally through retraining programs and job placement assistance. The TF is not advocating US investment in Iraqi factories, and is committed to the long term policy of economic privatization.

Beyond this, having helped Iraqi industries reestablish cement plants, small refineries, and asphalt plants, among others, while commanding the 101st Airborne Division, my view is that there are numerous industries that could be reestablished – ideally with Iraqi funds – and could be self-sustained, as they enjoy a comparative advantage in some factor of production (e.g. Iraq has vast sulfur reserves, reportedly the largest in the world, which would be used to refine high-grade sulfur for industrial purposes and production of fertilizer; Iraq also has large deposits of “sour crude” that are ideal of asphalt production). I strongly support encouraging such initiatives…

I strongly support the efforts of this task force. TF BSO is assessing Ministry of Industry and Minerals (MIM) SOEs as well as private factories. MIM is responsible for approximately 56 of the 190 or so SOEs nationwide. These 56 SOEs have approximately 200 factories. Within the 56 MIM SOEs, TF BSO has assessed 25 of these and is working closely with Deputy Prime Minister Salih and the MIM to revitalize the
existing Iraqi industry base. Where competitive industry capacity exists, TF BSO and DoD will do everything they can to support the ministries, the factories, and provincial leadership to restart operations, re-employing as many current workers as circumstances permit. Several of the SOEs visited are in relatively good shape and can be restarted with minimal investment in power restoration. Initial efforts identified ten large factories, from Baghdad through Al Anbar Province, where $6M provided by the Iraqi Government can restart operations and reemploy 11,000 workers. The products that these facilities generate will help to meet local and DoD demands, and have the potential to serve broader US and global markets.

The economic crisis did not stop some sources from downplaying the problem. *Newsweek*, for example, reported on the kind of hollow statistics show in Figure II.14 to report on “Iraq’s booming economy.” For example, there were 7.1 million cell-phone subscribers in Iraq in 2006, compared to 1.4 million in 2004. It also reported 34,000 registered businesses in 2006 while the US Chamber of Commerce recorded only 8,000 in 2003. Inflation considered, basic goods became much more affordable after Saddam era tariffs were eliminated, and salaries went up 100%. Iraqis also purchased records numbers of cars; “Roadside bombs account for fewer backups than the sheer number of secondhand cars that have crowded onto the nation’s roads – five times as many in Baghdad as before the war.”722 The value of the Iraqi dinar did steadily increased compared to the Iranian rial, the Kuwaiti dinar, and the US dollar.723

Games with macroeconomic statistics, however, did not reflect the realities on the ground. The GDP did increase because of rises in oil prices and revenues, and vast amounts of wartime spending. On paper, this also increased GDP per capita. Conditions did improve in reality in the more secure Kurdish areas and some Sunni areas.

Most new business ventures, however, were as hollow as Iraq’s ghost forces and did nothing for the economy. Corruption, war time profiteering, combat damage, crime and sectarian and ethnic cleansing meant most Iraqis suffered far more than they gained and millions more lived in poverty and fear. Unemployment was a major factor driving recruiting for the militias and insurgents, while violence impoverished or exiled many of Iraq’s best professionals.

At the local level, ethnic groups seized control of the economic space through intimidation of opposite sects and nationalists. In violent ethnically mixed cities, such as Baquba, Baghdad, and many other areas outside the Kurdish zone, businesses were closed and thus the unemployment crisis was so severe that many young men joined sectarian groups to provide their families with food and shelter.
Figure II.14: IMF GDP Estimates and Projections, 2004-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
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<td>34.5</td>
<td>47.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>(in USD billion)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Oil Revenue</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>66.5</td>
<td>67.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Capita GDP</td>
<td>949.0</td>
<td>1,237.0</td>
<td>1,635.0</td>
<td>2,060.0</td>
<td>2,319.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real GDP (% change)</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Fiscal Balance</td>
<td>-40.6</td>
<td>908</td>
<td>-6.1</td>
<td>-2.1</td>
<td>-0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(in % of GDP)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Consumer Price Inflation</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>(annual %)</td>
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The Problem of Education

The fight for sectarian control of political and economic space had clearly entered the institution of education. Purging of academic moderates from Universities and sectarianism in schools all the way down the elementary school level promised to create sectarianism in future generations.

In the beginning of October, The Guardian reported that Iraq’s education system was also in danger of collapsing. Ongoing violence in major cities and assassination attempts on professionals led many teachers to flee the country. Students also feared car bombs and IED attacks as they traveled sometimes long distances to universities. Female professors were repeatedly threatened to wear Islamic dress. A professor of political science at Baghdad University said, “A large number have left the country, while others have applied to go on prolonged sick leave. We are using recently graduated MA and PhD students to fill in the gaps.” Professors said they had to lower standards for students as well to help reduce daily pressure. Many wealthier families with university level students started sending their children abroad to finish their degrees – particularly to Egypt.

The problem was also visible in lower levels of education. At a high school in Amariyah in Baghdad attendance was down 50%. Several teachers were also murdered in September, and the number of full time faculty dropped from 42 to 20. Most parents said they are too nervous for
their children walking to school in a neighborhood where bombings occurred almost daily. A brain drain of Iraq’s educated elite could prove disastrous to efforts to revive a middle class - particularly in Baghdad. Continued sectarian violence in the streets will create a generation of children with incomplete education up through the high school level, making it difficult to find jobs and opening the door for recruitment into militias.

The September – October UN Assistance Mission to Iraq Human Rights report cited the grave situation facing education in Iraq. As of the end of October, schools in remote areas of Baghdad still had not opened for the 2006 school year. And according to statistics by the Ministry of Education, over 300 teachers and employees in the Ministry were killed and additionally 1,158 wounded in 2006 alone. The highest rate of assassinations of Iraq academics – 44% - occurred in Baghdad, and Anbar, Mosul, and Basra each accounted for 10% of the total number of assassinations.

UNAMI reported that schools in Ramadi were particularly adversely affected. Almost all Ramadi schools did not open for the 2006 school year due to threats from al-Qa’ida. In Diyala Province, the Governorate Council said that 90% of the schools were closed due to the security situation.

Education in Iraq took another hit in November with the mass kidnapping of 150 employees and visitors at the Ministry of Higher Education in Baghdad. Reports varied on how many victims were released or killed, but the Minister of Higher Education, Abed Dhiab al-Ujaili, said that dozens remained missing weeks after the kidnapping. He also said that teaching at universities in Baghdad was suspended until the kidnappers were identified and captured. An anonymous administrator at a Baghdad university told the Inter Press Service, “Iraqi universities have turned into militia and death squad headquarters… Pictures of clerics and sectarian flags all over are not the only problem, but there is the interference of clerics and their followers in everything.” The employee added that clerics had control over what students studied and which teachers remained at the universities and which became targets of sectarian violence. The mass kidnapping had its intended effect of keeping professors and students at home out of fear for their lives.

According to an article in *Asia Times*, UNESCO reported that before the 1991 Gulf War, enrollment in Iraqi primary schools was close to 100%. The Ba’ath Party mandated that children had to attend at least primary school, but the Party also had control over subject material and educators. Thus, the “de-Ba’athification” plan instituted by the Coalition Provisional Authority resulted in the firing of many teachers and administrators. According to the article, a chief education supervisor in Baghdad said that most new teachers were “selected for being members of Islamic parties in power or those who paid bribes in order to get a job.”

An education manager, Abdel Aziz, told the Inter Press Service that many schools across Iraq remained inadequate because reconstruction projects lacked sufficient funding and subcontractors failed to meet standards. School officials also said that in Baghdad and southern Iraq, militias and death squads took over many school buildings.

The Ministry of Education’s statistics confirmed the crisis of Iraq’s education system. In October 2006 only 30% of Iraq’s 3.5 million students attended classes; attendance for the school year starting in September was a record low. According to the study group Brussels Tribunal, at least 270 academics had been killed since the US-led invasion in 2003. A brain drain of Iraq’s educated elite could prove disastrous to efforts to revive a middle class - particularly in Baghdad.
Continued sectarian violence in the streets will create a generation of children with incomplete education up through the high school level, making it difficult to find jobs and opening the door for recruitment into militias. Further, unemployment in Iraqi remained between 30-45% in the fall of 2006.

In mid January the Iraqi Ministry of Education stated that only 30% of elementary aged Iraqi school children attended school at that time, down from 75% at the same time in 2006. Almost 50% of Iraq’s population was under 18, and the devastating effects of lack of education would be seen in generations to come.

An elementary school teacher in Baghdad said that she saw the general trend of Sunni children leaving schools faster than Shi’ite children. For example, when parents of Sunni children found out that Mahdi Army men were guarding the school, they immediately withdrew their children. School children also reported being harassed by teachers and classmates if they had a popular Sunni name and attended a Shi’ite school, and vice versa. Instead of attending school, many children accepted $20 from insurgents to plant bombs; at the start of the war insurgents paid as much as $1,000 for that job.727

In an attempt to combat the brain drain in Iraq, top Iraqi intellectual and political figures began plans for an American University in Iraq. The University would be modeled after those in Cairo and Beirut and would recruit teachers from around the world. The plans already include a board of trustees, a business plan by international consulting firm McKinsey & Company, three candidates for university president, and $25 million – mostly from Kurdish and American sources.

However, the university’s site would be in the northeastern Kurdish province of Sulaimaniya. The odd location was primarily for security reasons, as intellectuals and students fled constant attacks in Baghdad. Planners believed that the location in Kurdistan would help attract more aid. The project’s Kurdish founder, Barham Silah, said, “You really need to develop the political elite of the future, the educated elite of the future. The focus is also to stimulate reform in the Iraqi education system.”

Yet many Arab education officials believe that placing the university in Kurdistan would create more tensions. If Kurdistan seceded from the Iraq and became an autonomous region it would be more difficult for Arab students to travel to Sulayaminiya. But the reality of Baghdad led some intellectuals to accept the location. Construction was planned to begin in the spring of 2007 with the first class starting in 2008. Degree programs would be those crucial to Iraq; business, petroleum engineering, and computer science.728

**The Problem of Healthcare**

The fighting helped cause a health care crisis in Iraq that continued to have an adverse effect on the civilian population and contributed to the brain drain. The Health Ministry was infiltrated by Shi’ite militias – most with ties to the Mahdi Army – and was unable to provide care for victims of sectarian violence, let alone serious illnesses.

In mid November the *Los Angeles Times* reported on Iraq’s deteriorating health care system. The security crisis in the fall of 2006 caused a dire shortage of medical equipment and qualified doctors. According to the Iraqi government, the child mortality rate increased since the US led
invasion in 2003 from 125 deaths per 1000 births in 2002 to 130 deaths per 1000 births in 2006. Sunni religious leaders additionally accused the Shi’ite run Health Ministry of withholding supplies from Sunni civilians.

In response to accusations that the Health Ministry had sectarian ties, the US military raided the ministry and arrested employees suspected of kidnapping patients at the Medical City Hospital in Baghdad. In response, the ministry severed ties with the US military and initially refused to open a new hospital built by the US Army Corp of Engineers in a Sunni neighborhood.729

Sunnis said that they were too afraid to visit relatives in hospitals because they feared being kidnapped and tortured by Mahdi Army members. Omar al-Jubouri, a member of the Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party, said that he had to send Iraqi Army units with Sunnis who went to pick up relatives from the Health Ministry controlled Baghdad morgue.730

The experience of a Sunni doctor in Baghdad verified Sunni apprehensions about the Health Ministry. The doctor said that the Mahdi Army infiltrated the support staff at the hospitals and thus had close access to patients. A Mahdi Army member and a porter at the hospital offered him $300 for every patient that he identified as a Sunni. He also said that Sunnis were being murdered in their hospitals beds by overdoses of a drug that caused cardiac arrest.

The doctor said that Sunni patients who were ready to be discharged would mysteriously disappear or be found dead in their rooms. He also believed that medical records were altered or removed to hide the evidence. In a letter to the Sunday Times, the doctor sited numerous instances in which patients disappeared or were killed by people he believed to be members of the Mahdi Army. When he questioned the support staff, he was told to keep quiet and not ask questions or he would lose his own life. Mahdi Army members also coerced paramedics into giving Sunnis overdoses of lethal drugs, according to the Times article. 731

In addition to dealing with militia infiltration, doctors in Baghdad hospitals – where dozens of injured victims arrived everyday – lacked the supplies and equipment to treat patients with ailments not related to the sectarian war. Doctors said that they lacked the means to treat heart attacks, cancer, and many ever lacked x-ray machines. A pharmacist in Taji said he was running out of “medicine, blood bags, oxygen, anesthetics, vaccines, and IV fluids.”

Since 2003, the US spent $493 million on healthcare in Iraq. Further, the $50 million children’s hospital in Basra had yet to open and had cost an additional $40 million. A plan to create 150 primary healthcare centers in Iraq was scaled back to 142, but as of November 2006, only six had opened – five of which were in Shi’ite neighborhoods in Baghdad. According to the LA Times article, the Iraqi Health Ministry spent $1.1 billion in 2006 compared with $22 million in 2005. The ministry spent 55% of the budget on medication and medical supplies and 33% on salaries.

In the Sunni town of Tikrit, there were no functioning MRI machines and patients had to travel 200 miles to Mosul. Doctors in the town felt they were being punished by the Shi’ite Health Ministry because they worked in the town that Saddam Hussein was from. A Sunni doctor in Baquba also thought he was denied medical supplies because of his sect. The ministry denied the allegations, saying that supplies had to be picked up in Baghdad. However, the security situation made it too dangerous for Shi’ite workers to bring supplies to Sunni regions and for Sunni doctors to travel to Shi’ite areas in Baghdad to pick up medical supplies.
Both Sunni and Shi’ite doctors were targets since the start of the war – 455 medical workers were killed since 2003. The problem was exacerbated however, by the fact that 7,000 workers fled the country in that same time frame. Only in the Kurdish north and Muthanna province in the south were mortality rates not increasing. Similar to the case of education professionals, the attacks on doctors threatened to leave the country in a humanitarian crisis with insufficient medical supplies and healthcare professionals.\(^{732}\)

A doctor working in a Baghdad hospital said:\(^{733}\)

> In my opinion, the health sector needs highly competent people. The Sadrist have no experience in this area and do not have an elite capable of leading such a ministry. The consequences are horrendous. Most doctors have left because of the behavior of the Sadrist clerics. They do not have any medical degree yet interfere in all aspects of our work, including medical diagnoses. Every hospital has its own mullah who gives order in the name of waliyat al-faqih [rule of the jurisprudent] or of who knows what else they come up with.

And an Iraqi journalist interviewed by Crisis Group in early December also agreed: \(^{734}\)

> The Health Ministry is being purged on sectarian grounds. Sunnis are identified and killed, whether in hospitals or in the ministry itself. A few days ago, Ahmed Mohamed, a pharmacist, was killed by militiamen in the ministry parking lot. This was done under the eyes of Iraqi security forces responsible for the ministry’s safety, yet infiltrated by militias.

Several sources indicated that the Health Minister was one of the officials that al-Maliki planned to replace in early 2007, but al-Sadr would still have the authority to nominate the candidates.

**The Problem of Oil**

The failure of the Iraqi government to adopt a petroleum law (promised by year end 2006) remained another major stumbling block to effective Iraqi government planning, developing a well-structured aid effort, and new investment, especially by the major oil companies, although smaller firms actively engaged in drilling in the north. Moreover, reports that Iraq set up a federal council for all and gas (chaired by the Prime Minister) to “endorse all oil deals with foreign investors and observe their implementation” raised still more questions about both aid and Iraqi revenue plans and capabilities. Regional distribution of oil revenues and control over new projects remained contentious issues, though definitions of what constitutes “new” oil vary based on who is doing the interpreting.

As for facilities, there were well over 300 incidents since the fall of Saddam, and president’s “mission accomplished” announcement. These not only affected integrity of oil facilities but compounded Iraq’s pipeline problems, some of which could not operate at their published rated throughput capacity for throughput serious consequences.

In the early fall, oil production remained below target levels. The oil industry suffered from infrastructure attacks and the inability of Iraq to refine crude oil. However, oil accounted for 90% of Iraq’s government revenue in 2006 and some strides were made to increase production capacity. \(^{735}\)

In an attempt to jumpstart the economy, Deputy Prime Minister Barham Saleh called for international collaboration to boost Iraq’s oil industry. He said Iraq needed to emerge as a
“secure petro-democracy,” which could help quell sectarian violence. The announcement in mid September came after months of disputes within the new government of who exactly controlled oil resources, an issue that was confounded further by talks of regional control of resources. Saleh said he hoped that oil would be a “unifying force rather than a resource to fight over.” He made the remarks during a donor conference in Abu Dhabi, sponsored by the UN and US. Mr. Saleh announced that Iraqi leaders were “nearing an agreement on a long-awaited hydrocarbon law that could usher in huge investments by foreign companies in Iraq’s oil sector.” He hoped that Parliament would approve rules for the management of Iraq’s oil sector by the end of the year, which would allow for more foreign investment and the possible salvation of Iraq’s economy.

However, Saleh conceded that the parties had not agreed on who would control the resource, the regional Kurdish government or the central government in Baghdad. According to US Deputy Treasury Secretary Robert M. Kimmitt, several big oil companies had told the US that they would invest in Iraq’s resource, despite the violence, if there were legal parameters.

Oil was a primary concern for Sunnis in the separation debate in Parliament that was occurring simultaneously. Kurds in the north and Shi’ites in the south wanted regional control of Iraq’s principle oil reserves - which stood at about 115 billion barrels - the world’s third largest following Saudi Arabia and Iran.736

Kurdish authorities announced in October plans to build two of their own refineries in the future. They also had several contracts with foreign firms to drill for oil around the city of Kirkuk. The issue inflamed tempers at Parliament during ongoing federalism debates.737 The issue of oil was the key source of contention between the Kurds and Baghdad.

A SIGIR audit report in late September said that Iraq had lost $16 billion in “potential foreign sales [of oil] over two years to insurgent attacks, criminals, and bad equipment.” Iraq was also paying billions to import refined petroleum products because they lacked the equipment to refine in Iraq. The audit stated that oil should have been Iraq’s primary source of income – instead it was a sign of the country’s failing infrastructure.738

Iraq opened a small refinery near Najaf on October 7, 2006. The refinery had a capacity of 10,000 barrels per day (bpd) – enough to supply citizens and factories in Najaf province. It was only the second refinery to open since the US led invasion. The Iraqi oil ministry announced plans to build a new 70,000 bpd refinery in Kowsinjaq and a 150,000 bpd refinery near Karbala. A large refinery with a 300,000 bpd capacity is planned for Basra. All the new refineries were strategically placed outside of the volatile central part of the country. Iraq’s largest refinery at Baiji continued to experience frequent attacks on pipelines and oil tanker drivers. Placing new refineries in the north and south of the country exacerbated Sunni concerns about the availability of oil in central Iraq if the country broke up into autonomous regions.739

Some news did come for the oil industry in mid October. The Turkish port of Ceyhan resumed importation of Iraqi oil. Pumping had ceased for several months due to the security crisis and deterioration of the pipelines. Iraq’s Northern Oil Company increased security efforts and was confident that exports to Turkey would be successful. However, the benefits of resumed exports were offset by the closure of the largest refinery in Baiji for the fourth day running. A refinery official said that electricity cuts caused the closure.740
According to Iraq’s oil minister, Hussein al-Shahristani, Iraq produced an average of 2.3 million bpd in October and exported between 1.6 and 1.7 million bpd. He stated that production was expected to reach 3 million bpd by the end of 2006 and 4.5 million bpd by 2010.741

Stuart Bowen of SIGIR said in an interview with The Guardian that oil smuggling was threatening to bring down the Iraqi government. He stated that it was the “number one problem” because insurgents attacked northern oil lines and trucks had to transport the oil, making it susceptible to smuggling.742

According to Iraq’s oil minister, Hussein al-Shahristani, Iraq produced an average of 2.3 million bpd in October and exported between 1.6 and 1.7 million bpd. He stated that production was expected to reach 3 million bpd by the end of 2006 and 4.5 million bpd by 2010.743 Shahristani’s expectations were unlikely to be met, however, as November saw a drop in production to 2.04 million bpd with 1.47 million bpd exported. The official goal set by the Iraqi government was 2.5mil bpd – a shortfall of 47% in November, 43% in October, and 33% in September. Oil only produced revenue of $1.26 billion in November - and if Bowen’s assessment was correct - a good portion of that money was eaten away by corruption.744

The Iraq Study Group Report stated several problems inhibiting the production of oil:745

There is no metering system for the oil. There is poor maintenance at pumping stations, pipelines, and port facilities, as well as inadequate investment in modern technology. Iraq had a cadre of experts in the oil sector, but intimidation and an extended migration of experts to other countries have eroded technical capacity. Foreign companies have been reluctant to invest, and Iraq’s Ministry of Oil has been unable to spend more than 15% of its capital budget.

Experts estimate that 150,000 to 200,000 – and perhaps as many as 500,000 – barrels of oil per day are being stolen. Controlled prices for refined products result in shortages within Iraq, which drive consumers to the thriving black market.

The Pentagon’s August-November Stability and Security in Iraq Report described the problem of oil as follows:746

The Coalition has worked to help the Government of Iraq restore oil facilities, increase production, improve refining, boost natural gas production, and maintain pipeline facilities. However, poor operational and maintenance practices, insurgent attacks, slow repair, and flawed procurement and contracting procedures have hampered progress and have precluded the Ministry of Oil from providing sufficient funds for operations and maintenance, needed rehabilitation projects, and new field development.

Oil exports failed to meet the goal of 1.7 million barrels per day and production fell short of 2.5 mbpd goal. The new goal for oil production in 2007 was dropped to 2.1 mbpd. As figure II.15 shows, the week of January 8 – 14 saw average production at 1.72 mbdp, the lowest in some time.747

Moreover, the black market oil movements in country, especially for refined products, remained high – and profitable. Metering of oil shipments and exports was still incomplete at best and Iraq’s the production and export figures are both suspect and variable.

According to Jerry Kiser, a US oil expert recruited by the Kurdistan Regional Government, Iran and Turkey were both actively looking to get involved in the Iraqi oil industry. Iran, he said, had $1 billion to invest and was looking for projects and companies to fund in Iraq. He also said that Iran received about 300,000 barrels of oil a day through smuggling in southern Iraq.748
Encouraging news did come for the oil industry in mid January. An Iraqi cabinet-level committee completed a draft law governing Iraq’s oil sector that would distribute all revenues through the federal government and grant the central government wide powers in exploration, development and awarding major international contracts.\textsuperscript{749} The draft stated that all oil revenues should first go to the central government before being sent back to the regions in amounts proportional to population. It also provided for strong central government oversight and set up a Federal Oil and Gas Council to review the oil contracts. It did so even though Kurdish, and some Shiite, parties wanted to maintain regional control over the contracts, while Sunni Arabs favored giving the federal committee the power to approve contracts, rather than just review them and offer advice.

The council would pass judgment on each contract, even when it originated in a proposed deal between a company and one of the oil-producing regions. It would, however, make such decisions based on specific guidelines, like a directive to maximize profits for Iraq and to keep the contracting process transparent. There are other checks and balances: One example is that the regions can propose their own deals, but can only to work with companies “pre-qualified” in Baghdad.

The draft law also specified that technical experts in the Oil Ministry must participate in the process at all levels, and in developing “model contracts” to be used as templates at all levels of Iraq’s oil industry. The Oil Ministry would develop plans for which oil fields would be developed and drilled first, and which ones would follow. The Federal Oil and Gas Council would either endorse that plan or send it back for revisions.

The draft law did, however, allow the regions to initiate the process of tendering contracts before sending them to Baghdad for approval. It also set up demanding criteria to govern the deliberations of the committee rather than simply relying on its independent discretion. Because the Kurds objected to the use of the word “approve” in describing the committee’s duties, the draft law also gave the committee the power to review and reject contracts that did not meet the criteria.

The draft law altered the nature of Iraq’s state-controlled oil industry by giving far more independence — possibly leading to eventual privatization — to the government companies that control oil exports, the maintenance of pipelines and the operation of oil platforms in the Gulf. It also revived the Iraqi National Oil Company, a countrywide umbrella organization that Saddam Hussein had sharply weakened. At the same time, the law allowed any region that produces at least 150,000 barrels of oil a day to create its own operating company.

The “bad” or uncertain news is that these reports were submitted to the Ministry for review and evaluation in later 2006, but no public results were available although serious damage was reported to have taken place in both the southern fields as well as Kirkuk. Moreover, GAO studies showed that the Oil Ministry spent only limited amounts of its $3.5 billion capital budget in 2006 because of poor financial controls, and security problems caused by combat and crime.\textsuperscript{750}
Figure II.15: Oil Production, Million of Barrels per day: May-November 2006

The Problem of Electricity

The fighting also prevented the reconstruction of the electricity sector and improving the distribution of power while demand surged. The August-November Stability and Security in Iraq report said that during the reporting period the average daily peak generating output was 4,650 MW – 78% of the Iraqi government’s goal.

From July – October 2006 electrical capacity was above pre-war levels and was following an upward trend. However, Iraqis in Baghdad suffered from severe power loss in mid-October from attacks on lines. For several days, Baghdadis received only 2 hours of electricity per day. The average in Baghdad was 4.7 hours of electricity per day. Outside the capital, however, electricity averaged 11.3 hours.

Iraqis in Baghdad also continued to rely heavily on generators, causing inflation in fuel prices. Baghdad was isolated from the national power grid because of attacks against electrical lines into the capital. Repair crews routinely received death threats and were killed by snipers.

Lt. Gen. Chiarelli said that there were several reasons why it so was difficult to supply electricity to Baghdad: 751

Iraqis do not have a plan to perform scheduled and unscheduled maintenance; transformers run by gas turbines and there is not enough quality gas; there are attacks on the system; the US did not initially understand how terrible the distribution system was.

Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Funds (IRRF) divided allocation into three sectors: Generation facilities that produce power; transmission networks that carry the power across Iraq; and distribution networks that deliver power to local areas. All but two generational facilities were completed by the fall of 2006, but half of the distribution projects had yet to begin. Further, 74% of IRRF were expended and an extra $20 billion was deemed necessary for completion.752

The August-November Stability and Security in Iraq report said that during the reporting period the average daily peak generating output was 4,650 MW – 78% of the Iraqi government’s goal. Government produced electricity averaged 11 hours during the reporting period, but Baghdad averaged only 6 hours per day. Interdiction of lines in other parts of the country also caused spotty power. In addition, “Almost half of Iraqis reported supplementing government supplied electricity with private generators to fill the supply gap. The shortfall between government-supplied electricity and demand is aggravated by the absence of a rational fee-for-service tariff system that would encourage conservation and reduce the effects of corruption.”753

As Figures II.16 and II.17 show, Baghdad received on average considerably less electricity than the rest of the nation. In the week ending January 10, 2007 Baghdad only received an average of 3 hours of electricity. The level of daily electricity supplied varied over time, but showed little real increase since 2004. Electricity supplied was roughly 55% of national demand at the end of 2006 according to US estimates, and this was supply into the grid. In much of the country, fighting and theft meant that power lines were gone or never installed, and no one could begin to measure how much power actually reached the people.754

Interdiction of lines in other parts of the country also caused spotty power. In addition, “Almost half of Iraqis reported supplementing government supplied electricity with private generators to fill the supply gap. The shortfall between government-supplied electricity and demand is
aggravated by the absence of a rational fee-for-service tariff system that would encourage conservation and reduce the effects of corruption.”

In the last six months of 2006, insurgents succeeded in their tactic of electrically isolating Baghdad, according to a New York Times report. Insurgents attacked towers in the deserts to the north and south of the capital, where they could easily kill repair crews. The attacks were particularly devastating because the towers brought almost all the power to Baghdad from the energy rich north and south. Looters also removed much of the valuable steel and aluminum from the towers and sold it on the black market – making repairs even more difficult.

Electricity officials said that in March 2006 only one or two lines were down, but by summer that number had risen to six or seven. The most devastating attack came on 6 July when insurgents targeted all the lines at the same time, and the government was unable to reverse the damage.

The typical insurgent strategy was to explode the four support joints on a single tower, which would bring down three others when it fell. On 17 December insurgents downed 40 towers running into Baghdad from the power plant in Beiji and 42 more connecting Beiji to Kirkuk.

The Iraqi electricity minister said, “Now Baghdad is almost isolated. We almost don’t have any power coming from outside.” He stated that seven of nine lines supplying Baghdad were down due to insurgent attacks and lack of repairs. He also could not think of any case in which the insurgents had been caught. The ministry had tried to make monetary arrangements with tribes in return for security of the lines, but they had all been ineffective.

The electricity ministry devised a plan to bring into Baghdad 100 generators by the summer of 2007 as well as construction of new power lines. The plan would cost $27 billion over ten years, but the supply of electricity would not meet demand until 2009, experts suggested. The ministry also planned to create a “centralized, automated control system to move electricity around what it now an antiquated grid run by engineers who manually throw switches at power stations and substations scattered around the country.”
**Figure II.16: Average Daily Hours of Electrical Power per Province, October 2006**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anbar</td>
<td>&gt;16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninawa</td>
<td>12-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahuk</td>
<td>&gt;16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arbil</td>
<td>12-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamim</td>
<td>12-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulaymaniyyah</td>
<td>12-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salah ad Din</td>
<td>&gt;16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diyala</td>
<td>9-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>&lt;8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karbala</td>
<td>12-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babil</td>
<td>9-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasit</td>
<td>9-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Najaf</td>
<td>9-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muthanna</td>
<td>12-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhi Qar</td>
<td>&gt;16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qadisiyah</td>
<td>9-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maysan</td>
<td>12-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basra</td>
<td>12-16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: Hours of power measures generation, not transmission and distribution. Not all Iraqis receive the amount of power indicated for their province on this chart.
The US Role in Iraq

The US was under international pressure in the fall of 2006 to stop a full-scale civil war from spreading throughout the country, and more importantly, throughout the region. Regional players, such as Iran, Syria, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt, voiced their concern about the threat of a regional war between Sunnis and Shi’a.

The political benchmarks that the US had hoped would put Iraq on the path to democracy seemed insignificant as the civil war intensified. The US was learning the lesson that democracy as an end-goal was overshadowed by the need for economic development and overall security. The US military’s provincial reconstruction teams were beginning to make some progress in providing basic services in vital areas, but time and money were running short to stop the civil war from engulfing the country.
In his final press conference on December 12, MNF-I Commander Gen. Chiarelli stressed the need for a well-rounded strategy in Iraq. He emphasized the need to provide meaningful employment to Iraqis to eliminate the need to rely on militias for payment. He also emphasized the need for the US military to stress language and cultural training for troops. He said, “This conflict is so complicated that now we have to start talking about things like cultural awareness and language training. Now, do we say that because we just want to come over and kind of cast away the stereotype of an American that doesn’t care about somebody else’s culture? Not at all. We do that because it means force protection.”

The November congressional elections that brought Democrats to power in both the House and Senate and the resignation of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld heightened talk of a new US strategy in Iraq. President Bush spoke of working with democrats to find a new strategy in the war. Rumsfeld’s resignation came only a day after the elections, and just the previous week President Bush had announced that Rumsfeld would stay on the end of his term. President Bush said that he was making the change because he wanted to “bring a fresh perspective as to how to achieve something that I think most Americans want, which is victory.” He added that Rumsfeld “understands that Iraq is not working well enough fast enough.” The President’s nomination to succeed Rumsfeld was Robert Gates, a former CIA director and advisor to his father.

After the congressional elections, some Sunni Iraqis expressed concern that the US would pull out troops too quickly. A Sunni employee at the housing ministry said that he would have preferred the republicans to stay in power because Iraqi security forces were not strong enough to provide security for Sunnis. A Sunni police captain agreed, “If the democrats took control of US policy, they would the US army out of Iraq and this is not in the interests of Iraqis in generals, and especially not the Sunnis.” Shi’ites, however, said they hoped the democrats would pull US forces out of Iraq and that Iraq was ready to govern itself.

However, both Sunnis and Shi’a welcomed the departure of Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld. The front page of a Sunni newspaper in Baghdad read, “The departure of Rumsfeld is not to be regretted and is a small consolation to the injured Iraqi people who have suffered so much from his policies and those of his aides.” Hamid la-Mutlaq, a senior leader of the Sunni National Dialogue Front with 11 Parliamentary seats, added strongly, “Yesterday, the curse of Iraq and the sin of the blood of its innocent people has fallen upon Rumsfeld, the enemy of humanity and the killer of Iraqis.” Shi’ites also approved the resignation, saying Rumsfeld was responsible for the outbreak of sectarian violence in Iraq, according to an AP article. Yet several reports confirmed that despite Iraqi approval of the replacement, Sunnis and Shi’ite alike expected little change in policy from Washington.

Several weeks after the announcement of Rumsfeld’s resignation, AP acquired a memo written by Rumsfeld two days before he resigned. Rumsfeld wrote, “In my view it is time for a major adjustment. Clearly, what US forces are currently doing in Iraq is not working well enough or fast enough.” He recommended redeploying some US troops to force Iraqis to step up, established benchmarks for Iraqi political progress, and conducting a reverse embedding program for Iraqi troops.

In the wake of Rumsfeld’s departure and the elections, General Pace organized a military team to examine strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan. General Pace said the goal was to bring new ideas to the table that he could present to the incoming Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates. The military
committee had no affiliation with the Baker-Hamilton Iraq Study Group, but Pace said that the military was weighing diplomatic and economic components as well as military tactics.\textsuperscript{763}

In addition, in a report to the Senate Armed Services Committee, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Lt. Gen. Michael Maples, said, “DIA judges that continued Coalition presence as the primary counter to a breakdown in central authority.” At the same briefing, General Abizaid said that US commanders in Iraq agreed that more US troops would not increase the US’s ability to achieve success in Iraq because the long run goal was the hand over control to Iraqi forces. The report to Congress was one of many reviews taking place at the end of 2006 to address the security crisis in Iraq and the US’s future role.\textsuperscript{764}

On November 19, defense officials said that the Pentagon team had outlined three possible options for Iraq: “Send in more troops, shrink the force but stay longer, or pull out.” Officials familiar with the group said that the first and third options had been all but dismissed. The second option would include boosting force numbers temporarily, then drawing troop levels down, but staying for a longer period of time.\textsuperscript{765}

The top US commander in the Middle East, General John Abizaid, spoke with the Senate Armed Services Committee on November 15, 2006. The discussion was the first meeting between the leader of CENTCOM and the newly elected democrats. Abizaid said that the most important change in Iraq was that more US forces needed to imbed with Iraqi Security Forces, both army and police, to advise on the planning and execution of missions. Abizaid also said that the 141,000 US forces in Iraq in mid-November would be maintained, but force strength could be altered in the following months. He said that he had hoped that US force strength about be at 10-12 brigades by the end of 2006, but it remained at 15. General Abizaid was also adamantly opposed to a timetable for withdrawal and any plans to partition Iraq along sectarian lines. Finally, he stated that the security situation in Iraq was still bad, but it had improved significantly since August 2006.\textsuperscript{766}

The Joint Chiefs of Staff presented their review of the situation in Iraq to the President on December 13, 2006. Several of the key proposals included building up troops in the short run for a possible confrontation with the Mahdi Army and a renewed offensive in Anbar, an economic proposal to lesson Iraqi unemployment, and a plan for a long term increase in the size of the military.\textsuperscript{767}

In a November 8 memo from national security adviser Stephen Hadley to President Bush – obtained by the \textit{New York Times} – Hadley outlined several ways that the US could support and encourage the Iraqi government:\textsuperscript{768}

\begin{itemize}
  \item Continue to target al Qaeda and insurgent strongholds in Baghdad to demonstrate the Shia do not need the Jaish al Mahdi to protect their families – and that we are reliable partners
  \item Encourage Ambassador Khalilzad to move into the background and let Maliki take more credit for positive developments (We want Maliki to exert his authority – and demonstrate to Iraqis that he is a strong leader – by taking action against extremists, not by pushing back on the US and coalition)
  \item Continue our diplomatic efforts to keep the Sunnis in the political process by pushing for the negotiation of a national compact and by talking up provincial council elections next spring/summer as a mechanism for Sunni empowerment
  \item Support [Maliki’s] announcement to expand the Iraqi Army and reform the MOI more aggressively
\end{itemize}
• Seek ways to strengthen Maliki immediately by giving him additional control over Iraqi forces, although we must recognize that in the immediate time frame, we would likely be able to give him more authority over existing forces, not more forces.

• Continue to pressure Iran and Syria to end their interference in Iraq, in part by hitting back at Iranian proxies in Iraqi and by Secretary Rice holding an Iraq-plus-neighbors meeting in the region in early December.

• Step up our efforts to get Saudi Arabia to take a leadership role in supporting Iraq by using its influence to move Sunni populations in Iraq out of violence and into politics, to cut off any public or private funding provided to the insurgents or death squads from the region and to lean on Syria to terminate its support for Baathists and insurgent leaders.

Hadley also recommended filling the “four brigade gap in Baghdad with coalition forces if reliable Iraqi forces cannot be identified.” He encouraged President Bush, General Casey, and the Secretary of Defense to maintain a dialogue with Maliki on his needs and a dialogue with other actors to support the Iraqi government.

The State Department put forth a proposal in the dialogue on changes to Iraqi policy based on a belief that constructive negotiations with Sunni insurgents failed. State Department officials advocating the proposal said that US efforts to include Sunni insurgents and ex-Ba’athists in the political process were futile and were harming US relations with the majority Shi’ite population – leaving America with no allies among the population. Advocates said the reality of the situation in Iraq was that the US could not please all parties or “bridge the deep divide in Iraq between the two branches of Islam.” The proposal, however, met opposition from Ambassador Khalilzad and military commanders in Iraq.

Speculations about the Iraq Study Group abounded in the fall, but on December 6, 2006 the ten-person group of experts presented their recommendations to the President. Both Secretary Baker and Congressman Hamilton said that the report offered no silver bullets for Iraq. The report began with an assessment of Iraq as “grave and deteriorating.” The executive summary stated, “Our most important recommendations call for new and enhanced diplomatic and political efforts in Iraq and the region, and a change in the primary mission of US forces in Iraq that will enable the United States to begin to move its combat forces out of Iraq responsibly.” The executive summary accepted the dangerous consequences of full-scale civil war in Iraq to Iraqis, the region, and the US and outlined the following broad approaches – which were discussed in more detail in the full report.

• The United States should immediately launch a diplomatic offensive to build an international consensus for stability in Iraq and the region. This diplomatic effort should include every country that has an interest in avoiding a chaotic Iraq, including all of Iraq’s neighbors. Iraq’s neighbors and key states in and outside the region should form a support group to reinforce security and national reconciliation within Iraq, neither of which Iraq can achieve on its own...

• Given the ability of Iran and Syria to influence events within Iraq and their interest in avoiding chaos in Iraq, the United States should try to engage them constructively...

• The United States cannot achieve its goals in the Middle East unless it deals with the Arab-Israeli conflict and regional instability...

• The Iraqi government should accelerate assuming responsibility for Iraqi security by increasing the number and quality of Iraqi Army brigades. While this process is underway, and to facilitate it, the United States should significantly increase the number of US military personnel, including combat troops, imbedded in and supporting Iraqi Army units...
• By the first quarter of 2008, subject to unexpected developments in the security situation on the ground, all combat brigades not necessary for force protection could be out of Iraq…

• The United States should work closely with Iraq’s leaders to support the achievement of specific objectives – or milestones – on national reconciliation, security, and governance…

• If the Iraqi government demonstrates political will and makes substantial progress toward the achievement of milestones on national reconciliation, security, and governance, the United States should make clear its willingness to continue training, assistance, and support for Iraq’s security forces and to continue political, military, and economic support. If the Iraqi government does not make substantial progress toward the achievement of milestones on national reconciliation, security, and governance, the United States should reduce its political, military, or economic support for the Iraqi government…

The options presented by the Iraq Study Group were thus similar to those that were being discussed in numerous governmental and military circles throughout the fall. The difficulty of implementing some of the options and the constantly deteriorating security and political crisis’ in Iraq shed little hope that the situation would get better before it got worse.

The novel recommendation of the study group – that of offering incentives and disincentives to the Iraqi government – failed to recognize the fact that US failures in Iraq had caused a portion of the political stalemate and security crisis and seemed unlikely to foster compromise. Other key recommendations were:771 The President should state that the US does not seek permanent military bases in Iraq; the President should restate that the US does not seek to control Iraq’s oil; the US should engage all parties in Iraq - with the exception of al-Qa’ida – and work to reintegrate militia members into civilian society.

The initial reaction to the report in Iraq was mixed. Prime Minister Maliki said that he supported the majority of the report because it called for handing over increased control of Iraqi security forces to the government. Sunnis, however, were disappointed that the report did not take a stance against Shi’ite militias. Sunnis said that if coalition forces left Iraq by 2008, Shi’ite security forces would lead a campaign against them. Dhafir al-Ani, a Sunni member of Parliament, said, “These recommendations might be a solution for the American crisis in Iraq, but a solution for the Iraqi crisis.772 The almost 150 page report outlined a variety of recommendations that would most likely draw discussion well into 2007, but it remained to be seen if President Bush would choose to implement the proposals and what impact they could have on stemming the civil war in Iraq. Spokesmen for President Bush said they suspected a new strategy for Iraq in early 2007.773

President Bush conceded for the first time that the US was not winning in Iraq in late December 2006. The President said that the US was neither winning nor losing – a significant change from his statement before the November elections that the US was “absolutely winning.” He also announced that he was considering a permanent increase in troop strength of the US Army and Marine Corp of 92,000. The planned rise in numbers came after top US commanders increasingly warned that the US military was stressed and at its breaking point due to the prolonged deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan.774

At the same time as the President stated that the US was no longer winning, USCENTCOM Commander, General John Abizaid announced plans to retire from his post in March 2007. He had served as top Commander in the region since 2003 and had already extended his duty at the request of former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Gen. Abizaid also said that he was unsure that a surge in US troops in Iraq would help quell violence.775
While in Iraq in late December, Secretary of Defense Gates said that he was conducting talks with key US commanders and “reserving judgment” on whether or not to advocate a surge of troops to Iraq. General Casey was said that he needed to see a complete plan of the purpose of additional American troops, but he was not opposed to the idea.776

Gates and the Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Peter Pace, traveled to Texas in late December to brief President Bush on Iraq. The President said that he was making “good progress” in forming a plan for Iraq, but that he would not be rushed. He added that the “key to success” was an Iraqi government “willing to deal with the elements there that are trying to prevent this young democracy from succeeding.”

The Pentagon announced on December 27 that it planned to send about 3,500 troops to USCENTCOM’s forward operating base in Kuwait to be quick responders to any emergencies in the region.777 Various sources reported that military officials and advisers to President Bush said that the ‘surge’ option would include anywhere between 10,000 and 30,000 US troops, most of whom would be sent to Baghdad to engage in a ‘clear, hold, and build’ strategy; the President had yet to announce his formal plan.

Administration officials also said that the President planned to supplement the additional forces with a $1 billion for job creation in Iraq. Prime Minister Maliki was said to agree to Bush’s planned troop ‘surge’ and promised an equal number of Iraq troops. The Iraqi Army troops were expected to come from the northern Kurdish region, leading some US officials to question how effective they would be in Baghdad.778

As part of a new strategy in Iraq, administration officials indicated that President Bush would name Lt. Gen. David H. Petraeus as the top military commander in Iraq to replace Gen. George W. Casey, Jr. Adm. William J. Fallon was also expected to be named head of USCENTCOM after Gen. John Abizaid’s departure.779 At the diplomatic level, the US ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, was expected to be nominated for the top US position at the United Nations. Administration officials said that the envoy to Pakistan, Ryan C. Crocker, could be Khalilzad’s replacement.780

On January 10, 2007 President Bush officially announced the new US strategy in Iraq. He accepted responsibility for mistakes that were made as a result of previous US strategy in the war in Iraq. He also acknowledged the key point, “In our discussions, we all agreed that there is no magic formula for success in Iraq. And one message came through loud and clear: Failure in Iraq would be a disaster for the United States.” The President stated that the consequences of failure would be the growth of Islamic extremism, progress in Iran’s nuclear program, and the creation of a safehaven for terrorists to attack the United States.

Bush proposed a new set of benchmarks for the Iraqi government and security forces and committed an additional 17,500 US troops to Baghdad and 4,000 troops to Anbar Province. He reiterated that there was no set date for US withdrawal, but that US aid and troop support for Iraq was contingent on Iraqi making progress on its benchmarks. The President linked Iraq to the greater struggle on the war on terror and said that the “challenge playing out in the Middle East… is the decisive ideological struggle of our time.” A new bipartisan Congressional working would also be created to meet regularly with the administration to address the war on terror.781

The new Army and Marine Counterinsurgency Manual reflected some of the hardwon lessons of the Iraq war. For example, the manual stressed that 80% of counterinsurgency efforts should be
along political and economic lines and only 20% should be military.\textsuperscript{782} Reconstruction in Iraq, however, only began in earnest with the creation of provincial reconstruction teams in 2006 and the first real initiative to create jobs for Iraqis would enter the US strategy in the 2007 fiscal year.

In answer to advance policy questions from the Senate Armed Services Committee, Lt. Gen. David H. Petraeus stated that the US made the following mistakes up to that point in the war:\textsuperscript{783}

First, there were a number of assumptions and assessments that did not bear out. Prominent among them was the assumption that Iraqis would remain in their barracks and ministry facilities and resume their functions as soon as interim governmental structures were in place. That obviously did not transpire. The assessment of the Iraqi infrastructure did not capture how fragile and abysmally maintained it was (and this challenge, of course, was compounded by looting). Additionally, although most Iraqis did, in fact, greet us as liberators (and that was true even in most Sunni Arab areas), there was an underestimation of the degree of resistance that would develop as, inevitably, a Shi’a majority government began to emerge and the Sunni Arabs, especially, the Saddamists, realized that the days of their dominating Iraq were over. Sunni Arab resistance was also fueled by other actions noted below. Beyond that, as noted recently by President Bush, there were a number of situations that did not develop as was envisioned:

- There was the feeling that elections would enhance the Iraqi sense of nationalism. Instead, the elections hardened sectarian positions as Iraqis voted largely based on ethnic and sectarian group identity.
- There was an underestimation of the security challenges in Iraq, particularly in 2006 in the wake of the bombing of the mosque in Samara, coupled with an over-estimation of our ability to create new security institutions following the disbandment of the Iraqi security forces – which was not helped by the planning issues described below.
- It repeatedly took us time to recognize changes in the security environment and to react to them. What began as an insurgency has morphed into a conflict that includes insurgent attacks, terrorism, sectarian violence, and violent crime. Our responses have had to continue to evolve in response, but that has not always been easy.

A number of mistakes were made by both political and military leaders during the course of Operation Iraqi Freedom:

- The very slow (if that) execution of the reconciliation component of de-Ba’athification left tens of thousands of former Ba’ath Party members (many of them Sunni Arabs, but also some Shi’a) feeling that they had no future opportunities in, or reason to support, the new Iraq. To be fair to CPA, AMB Bremer intended to execute reconciliation (or exceptions to the de-Ba’athification order) and gave me permission, e.g., to do so on a trial basis in Ninevah Province; however, when we submitted the results of the reconciliation commission conducted for Mosul University and subsequent requests for exception generated by Iraqi processes with judicial oversight, no action was taken on them by the de-Ba’athification Committee in Baghdad. As realization set in among those affected that there was to be no reconciliation, we could feel support for the new Iraq ebbing in Sunni Arab majority areas.
- Disbanding the Iraqi army (which was, to be sure, an army that Iraq did not need in the long term as it had vastly more senior officers than were remotely required and was more of a jobs program than a competent military force) without simultaneously announcing a stipend and pension program for those in the Army, the future plan for Iraq’s defense forces, and provisions for joining those forces undoubtedly created tens of thousands of former soldiers and officers who were angry, feeling disrespected, and worried about how they would feed their families. (The stipend plan was eventually announced some 5 weeks after the disestablishment was announced, but it did not cover senior officers, who remained, therefore, influential critics of the new Iraq.) This action likely fueled, at least in part, the early growth of the insurgency and anti-coalition feeling.
- We took too long to recognize the growing insurgency and to take steps to counter it, though we did eventually come to grips with it.
We took too long to develop the concepts and structures needed to build effective Iraqi security forces to assist in providing security to the Iraqi people.

Misconduct at Abu Gharyb and in other less sensational, but still damaging cases, inflamed the insurgency and damaged the credibility of Coalition forces in Iraq, in the region, and around the world.

We obviously had inadequate plans, concepts, organizations, resources, and policies for the conduct of Phase IV (stability and reconstruction) operations; consequently, we were slow to move into Phase IV operations.

We had, for the first 15 months or more in Iraq, an inadequate military structure. With hindsight, it is clear that it took too long to transform V Corps HQs into CJTF-7 HQs, and that even when we had CJTF-7 HQs, it was not capable of looking both up and down (i.e. performing both political-military/strategic functions and serving as the senior operational headquarters for counterinsurgency and stability operations). Moreover, it is clear that we should have built what eventually became MNSTC-I HQs and the TF-34 HQs (which oversees detainee/interrogation operations) much sooner, along with the other organizations that were eventually established (e.g., the Gulf Region Corps of Engineer HQs).

Although not a problem in the 101st Airborne Division AOR during my time as 101st commander, it is clear that in certain other AORs there were more tasks than troops – especially in Anbar Province for at least the first year and likely in other areas as well.

Finally, the strategy pursued in the wake of the bombing of the Al Askariya Mosque in Samarra in February 2006 was unable to arrest the spiraling violence and rise of harmful sectarian activities. Repeated operations in Baghdad, in particular, to clear, hold, and build did not prove durable due to lack of sufficient Iraqi and Coalition Forces for the holdphase of the operations.

The gradual transition of the war from one involving extremists and activists to mass popular support of armed sectarian groups drew into question the ability of the US to prevent escalation to full scale civil war. The Bush strategy had the potential – with the help of the Iraqi government – to slowly bring life back to normal in the capital, but sectarian support of armed groups had spread throughout the country. It was unclear if US and Iraqi forces – with questionable loyalties – could stop the trend toward political and economic control by sectarian groups.
V. Attack Patterns

Another way to analyze the insurgency is to look at the pattern of attacks and casualties. This is not always easy. There has been a reasonable amount of summary reporting, and a flood of reporting on daily incidents. However, US and British official reporting on the insurgency has been erratic, and has left many gaps that make it difficult to analyze the insurgency's intensity and cycles, and characterize trends.

For example, the counts of attacks issued by senior US officials have generally focused on attacks directed at US and Iraqi government targets rather than all attacks, and did not include all attempts and minor incidents. They generally have not included Iraqi criminal activity or sabotage, although some is clearly insurgent driven. DIA figures and Coalition data also tend to be skewed in favor of counts of attacks on Coalition forces and undercount attacks on Iraqi civilians, and some aspects of Iraqi officials, military, and police.

One of the tragedies of Iraq is that as part of its effort to “spin” reporting on the war in favorable directions, the Department of Defense has been slow to count Iraqi civilian and insurgent casualties, report on Iraqi military and police casualties in ways that treat them as partners whose sacrifice deserves recognition, and match its analysis of the impact of the insurgency with equal reporting on sectarian and ethnic violence. Coalition counts also undercount acts of sabotage. Like most partial counts, this disguises another important shift in the patterns in insurgency.

These problems have been compounded by the fact there are few meaningful Iraqi government data. Iraqi Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior had stopped issuing meaningful reporting on the number and intensity of attacks in the summer of 2004.

The US has, however, improved some of its reporting under pressure from Congress. Some data have emerged from Iraqi sources, and some organizations like Iraq Body Count provide useful additional material. As a result, it is possible to provide at least some insights based on the trends in the war.

Summary Attack Patterns

The broad attack patterns reported by MNF-I and the Coalition vary by period. They do not, however, show a decline or any evidence that the insurgency has been defeated. They instead show a slow rise in the average number of attacks and a shift towards Iraqi targets.

Attacks August 2005-January 2006

Figure III.1 shows the patterns in attack by province from August 29, 2005 to January 20, 2006. It shows that only four provinces accounted for 83% of the attacks – a consistent pattern since the early days of the insurgency, although some 43% of the total population lived in these provinces. It also shows that twelve provinces, with some 50% of the population received only 6% of the attacks.

Unclassified work by DIA and MNF-I showing the approximate number of total attacks per month from June 2003 to February 2004 is summarized in Figure III.3 and average weekly attacks by time period between January 2004 and May 2006 is shown in Figure III.4. These data reflect patterns typical of the cyclical variations in modern insurgencies. The same is true of the trend data on US, allied, and Iraqi casualties discussed later in this chapter, and it is clear from a comparison of such data that there is only an uncertain correlation between incident
counts and casualty counts, and even accurate incident counts would be only the crudest possible indication of the patterns in insurgency without a much wider range of comparative metrics.

These attack counts confirm the fact that insurgent activity surged before the January 30, 2005 elections temporarily eased back, and then surged again -- rather than diminishing in any lasting way. An internal US Army analysis in April 2005 calculated that the apparent shift was more a shift in focus to more vulnerable non-US targets than an actual drop in incidents. Similarly, a study by the National Intelligence Council in the CIA, that was leaked to Newsweek, concluded that US government reporting had so many conflicting sources and methods of analysis that the resulting metrics could not be trusted, and that there was inadequate evidence to support any conclusions about whether the insurgents were being defeated.

Figure III.5 shows the trend measured by a different standard: total attacks and effective attacks. It provides a much clearer picture of the intensity of the war and how sharp the cycles are in attempted attacks over time. At the same time, there is often surprisingly little correlation between attempted and effective attacks. The cycles in attempted attacks are much smaller and the trends are largely meaningless. The level of effective attacks is nearly constant from April 2005 through the end of 2005.

**Attacks in Early 2006**

The Department of Defense identified the following trends in attack patterns in its February 2006 report to Congress, “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq:”

- Over the last quarter of 2005, the overall number of IED attacks trended downward.
- Three-quarters of insurgent attacks resulted in no casualties or serious damage.
- 80% of attacks were directed at Coalition forces, but Iraqi’s suffered three-quarters of all casualties.
- Insurgent attacks range from a single insurgent executing one attack to a highly coordinated attack using different weapons systems. However, there were only four of the more sophisticated attacks in the six months prior.
- In the period between September 17, 2005 and January 20, 2006, 23% of car bombs were intercepted and defused. This was an increase from 17% in the three months prior.

In March, Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch reiterated that 75% of all attacks take place in three provinces. He added that the other 15 provinces averaged less than six attacks per day and that 12 of those averaged less than two per day. Nationwide however, attacks were averaging 75 per day, a level that had been consistent since August 2005. In April 2006, he stated that in al-Anbar province in particular, attacks had decreased from an average of 27 per day in October 2005, to about 18 a day. Despite an increase in trained Iraqi police and military forces and a number of joint US-Iraqi military operations, not to mention numerous political milestones, the number of overall attacks had not declined in the three years since the beginning of the war.

**Attacks Through May 2006**
The May 2006 DoD report to Congress included attack trends and violence during the “Government Transition” period: during the formation of Iraq’s new government after the elections.

Average weekly attacks in Figure III.4 for this period were higher than any previous period. The report speculated that this might be due to insurgents’ attempts to derail Iraqi political efforts by exploiting a vulnerable period in the political process, and the increase of sectarian violence following the February Askariya bombing. It must be noted however that only attacks reported to MNF-I are included in the report and it does not include “criminal activity.”

During this period of transition, Coalition forces were attacked the most. 68% of all attacks counted in the May report were targeted at the Coalition. Yet there were fewer casualties in these instances than attacks on “softer” Iraqi targets because US troops were well protected and attacks often were “standoff” in nature. However, the average number of attacks per week rose 13% during this period compared with the “Referendum/Election” period before it. The DoD report noted that this was likely due to the increase in sectarian violence following the February mosque bombing.

The attack trend analysis in the report is potentially useful, but suffered badly from the fact that there is no definition of what is counted as an “attack,” and no breakout of the means of the attack and probable target. The average weekly attack data do indicate a steady deterioration since the earlier election in February 2005 from an average of 470 before late August, 550 afterwards and 620 since February 11, 2006. This is a rise of nearly a third in a year, but again, the figures seem to define “attack” only as actions that can clearly be assigned to the insurgents, ignore sectarian and ethnic violence, and ignore disappearances, kidnappings, actions by “death squads,” etc. This concentration on insurgency while underplaying civil violence and the risk of civil conflict casts serious doubt on the integrity of the reporting.

For example, is it really credible that Coalition forces were targeted in 68% of all attacks, or is it simply those these are the attacks the US is counting and the count only includes attacks that are clearly by insurgents? All other reporting on Iraqi violence indicates that Iraqis have become the primary target, and sectarian and ethnic violence should be counted as well as insurgent action. The graph showing average daily casualties also indicates that Iraqis have become the primary target and suffer more than five times as many losses as Coalition forces, and this ratio might rise to 10:1 if all sectarian and ethnic violence were counted.

The US statistics on the distribution of attacks on targets differed sharply with that of the Iraqi Defense Ministry. In early June, Defense Minister Abdul-Qader Mohammed Jassim stated that 80% of attacks by “terrorists and organized crime” targeted Iraqi civilians. Comparatively, he said that 15% were against ISF and only 5% against Coalition forces.

Figure III.2, which shows attacks per capita by province gives a much more balanced picture of insurgent attacks although the failure to provide casualty estimates and any chronology of attacks with major political impact makes the reporting inadequate.

Similarly, in Figure II.6 that attempts to count the number of sectarian “incidents” and resulting casualties from February 2005 to April 2006 provides no overarching definition of exactly what qualifies for a “sectarian incident.” Nor does it describe how this information was counted and obtained. Is it all incidents reported to MNF-I (similar to how “attacks” is defined)? Is it information reported to Iraqi police forces? Does it just include those attacks where mass-
casualties occur, or does it include sectarian abductions, body dumps, ransoms and displacement? The bottom line is that there is no way to know.

The fact that the report insists that such violence “did not remain at those high levels,” immediately after the February mosque attack is a rather dubious claim and is only based on the month of April, the most recent month of reporting, when incidents declined from their peak of about 450 in March to 325 in April. This hardly makes for a downward trend.

**Attacks Through August 2006**


The text of the report noted that the average number of weekly “attacks” increased by 15 percent in the period denoted “government established” (May 20-August 11, 2006) since the previous reporting period, denoted as “government transition” (February 11-May 19, 2006). However, the accompanying graph provided in the report, reproduced as III.4 below, showed an increase closer to 25 percent. The raw numbers, requested by reporters from the Associated Press and Reuters, indicated a 23.5 percent increase of average weekly attacks from the previous reporting period. Weekly attack rates in July 2006 were flagged as the highest since the inception of the insurgency.

The report also noted that 63 percent of the attacks in the May to August reporting period were targeted at Coalition forces, the majority of which were considered “stand-off” attacks, which do not involve close-up confrontations between Coalition forces and insurgents. Rather, “such attacks typically consisted of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), small arms fire, and indirect weapons.”

The quarterly report cited a substantial increased in the number of attacks directed against civilians:

Nationally, in April 2006, civilians were the targets of 11% of attacks; this increased to 15% in June 2006. Baghdad showed a more pronounced shift in the targeting of civilians compared to the national trend. In Baghdad, civilian targets comprised 15% of total attacks in April and 22% in June.

Although 63 percent of attacks were directed toward coalition forces, Iraqi security forces and civilians incurred the overwhelming majority of casualties. As depicted in III.16B, Iraqi casualties increased by 51 percent compared to the previous quarter, making Iraqi casualties roughly seven times higher than Coalition casualties.

The data of the total number of attacks by province, illustrated in III.26, showed that the majority of attacks were concentrated in four of Iraq’s provinces—Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala and Salah ad Din. While these four provinces comprised around 37 percent of the population, the report noted, they accounted for 81 percent of all attacks. And Anbar and Baghdad, in particular, accounted for 55 percent of all attacks.

The report also pointed to a relatively steady decline in the weekly number of attacks on critical infrastructure, although there appeared to be a discrepancy on the rate of this decline over the past quarter. While the text indicated that the number of weekly attacks on infrastructure decreased form “an average of five per week to an average of two per week” since the past
The data on sectarian incidents in the report, depicted in III.6, showed a marked increase in the number of casualties, and a steady heightened state of the number of incidents.

While the attack trends analysis provided in the August 2006 DoD Quarterly Report to Congress showed improvement over past reporting—particularly in its assessment of the growing risk of civil war—the applicability and robustness of the data were limited by a number of shortcomings:

- **The variables were poorly defined, particularly in reference to what was counted as an “attack” and a “sectarian incident.”** The text defined an attack as a specific incident reported in the Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I) Significant Activities database, which included known attacks on coalition forces, the ISF, the civilian population, and infrastructure. However, it appeared that these attacks were largely limited to incidents that could be clearly assigned to insurgents, thus overlooking broader patterns of sectarian and ethnic violence (such as disappearances, kidnappings, “mystery killings,” and soft ethnic cleansing).

- **This omission of clear numbers made it difficult to verify trend analyses, and draw accurate conclusions from the data.** The apparent discrepancies between numbers provided in the text and those illustrated in the graphs on average weekly attacks, and average weekly attacks on infrastructure, signaled the need for supplying raw numbers in the report.

- **The lack of subcategories on the type and nature of attacks had the effect of oversimplifying dynamics of the fighting.** The main figure, for example, on average weekly attacks (See III.4), did not break down the type of attacks to account for shifts from Coalition to Iraqi security forces and civilian targets, although the text addressed this trend. The figures on average daily casualties, and total attacks by province (See III.16B and III.26), similarly did not specify the nature of the attacks; consequently, it was unclear the to what extent they reflected larger patterns in sectarian and ethnic violence. And the graph on sectarian incidents (See III.6), which should be addressing a key aspect in the development of the insurgency, did not include a breakdown by province, nor did it indicate whether incidents in Basra and Kirkuk were counted.
Average Attacks through December 2006

The growth of Shi’ite militias in 2006 and their hostile interactions with Sunnis was a fundamental change in the nature of the security situation. The US Ambassador to Iraq issued a statement that said although officials recognized the importance of militias, the key to demobilizations of armed groups still depended on a decline of the Sunni insurgency. However, according to a September 2006 GAO report, “the Sunni insurgent groups now see themselves as protectors of the Sunni community, and the Shi’a militias see themselves as protectors of the Shi’a community.” This security dilemma appeared to be mutually reinforcing, and until all Iraqis trusted governmental security forces, continued sectarian violence seemed unavoidable.800

During the first three weeks of Ramadan – which began on September 24 - the number of violent incidents averaged 36 a day. This figure shows an increase from the 28 a day average over the period from mid-June, when new security sweeps in Baghdad began, until the beginning of Ramadan. Before the sweeps began there was an average of 22 attacks a day. US military officials had expected an increase in attacks during Ramadan based on previous years experience.801 The week following the end of Ramadan saw a 41% decline in sectarian killings, according to Maj. Gen. William Caldwell.802

Overall attacks in October averaged 180 a week, according to Gen. Maples, Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency.803 The weeks following the end of Ramadan saw a 41% decline in sectarian killings, according to Maj. Gen. William Caldwell, MNF-I spokesman.804 The Department of Defense Stability and Security Report for August-November stated that attacks rose 22% during that period. Overall, 55% of all attacks occurred in Baghdad and Anbar Provinces. Further, “violence in Iraq was divided along ethnic, religious, and tribal lines, and political factions within these groups, and was often localized to specific communities.” The report also said that the majority of attacks, 68%, were directed at coalition forces.805

According to the DoD report, “Attack levels – both overall and in all specific measurable categories – were the highest on record during this reporting period, due in part to what has become an annual cycle of increased violence during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan.” In addition, “The most significant development in the Iraqi security environment was the growing role of Shi’a militants. It is likely that Shi’a militants were responsible for more civilian casualties than those associated with terrorist organization. Shi’a militants were the most significant threat to the Coalition presence in Baghdad and southern Iraq.”806

The Pentagon’s report summarized the security environment.807

- Baghdad remained the focus of much of Iraq’s violence, but it was also significant in Diyala and Anbar provinces and in the cities of Kirkuk, Mosul, Basra, Amara, and Balad.”

- The Violence in Anbar was almost completely initiated by Sunni extremists and directed at Coalition forces. However, there were attempts by al-Qaeda in Iraq and affiliated Sunni extremists to intimidate the local population. These efforts provoked a backlash. Some tribal chiefs and Sunni Rejectionist leaders began localized efforts to retake control of their areas.

- In Diyala, and recently in Balad, in conflict between al-Qaeda in Iraq and Jaysh al-Mahdi was a sectarian fight for power and influence. In Diyala, sectarian violence decreased in September, largely due to a successful series of Iraq Army/Coalition forces operations, which significantly degraded al-Qaeda in Iraq activity. However, in October, the number of casualties rose, as al-Qaeda in Iraq resumed sectarian attacks.
The conflict in Basra, Amara, and the south was characterized by tribal rivalry, increasing intra-shi’a competition, and attacks on Coalition forces operating in the region.

The report also succinctly summarized the change in the nature of the violence in Iraq during 2006:

The level of sectarian violence in Baghdad had risen, with most of it directed against civilians. Neighborhoods have responded by forming their own militias for self-defense. The Sunni Arab insurgency also remains a potent threat to Coalition forces and the ISF, but it generally conducts smaller scale attacks on military targets. As a result, the insurgents have had a lower profile than the sectarian elements executing civilians or al-Qaeda in Iraq elements conducting mass-casualty bombings and suicide attacks.

Within Baghdad, the growing threat from both Sunni and Shi’ite snipers prompted a US response. An al-Qa’ida video in October 2006 showed two US soldiers being shot by snipers. The footage was blurry, but the accuracy was obvious. The video was posted on a website used by the Mujahedeen Shura Council, according to the Associated Press. The US military would not release data on sniper attacks at the time, but it was clear from news reports that there was an increased threat of snipers in Baghdad, and they were becoming more accurate. For example, a US airman was killed on October 14 by a sniper in the capital. The soldier was trying to keep civilians away from a possible bombsite when the sniper shot him in the back of head from behind a building, proving the increased accuracy.

The US military also declared the Shi’ite dominated area east of the Tigris a haven for sniper militiamen. A sniper shot a soldier as he traveled door-to-door talking with Iraqi civilians, trying to instill confidence in American forces. An intelligence officer operating next to Sadr City said, “It’s on my mind when I leave the wire. Snipers create fear. That’s the whole point of snipers. It’s about stopping us from talking to the people.” As a result of the increased sniper threat in the early fall, US units began patrolling in Bradley vehicles rather than more vulnerable humvees. Soldiers also learned to run through open areas and scan rooftops to avoid the more accurate gunmen.

The US military caught a sniper during an operation in late October. The man had a high-powered scope, a video camera, and a hole in the trunk of his car so he could target US troops without being seen. To combat the sniper problem, the US military deployed counter sniper teams to search for snipers in neighborhoods that the troops knew well.

In early November, the New York Times reported that the US military had held an internal conference about the sniper problem, but there seemed to be no easy tactical answer. US marines in Anbar province were struck by the sudden increased accuracy and frequency of sniper attacks. Marines noted that they rarely saw the elusive snipers and that most attacks seem to come when the marines are not engaged in active combat and from up to 300 away.

The Times article said that snipers often used long barreled Dragunov rifles and hit on platforms, rooftops, and within cars. A general in Anbar said that insurgents began creating sniper training camps in the fall of 2006. He said, “We heard from some of our sources that the insurgents were going around with loudspeakers, saying that if you want to be a sniper we will pay you three times what your salary is now.” He also explained, “the sniper teams have a network of spotters, and that each time the marines leave their outpost, spotters hidden among the Iraqi population call the snipers and tell them where the marines are and what they are doing.”

Most of the time snipers only took one shot, which allowed them to get away quickly. They also tended to target marine radiomen. To combat the sniper problem, marine units began limited foot
patrols during the day, and if they did leave their vehicles, they tried to quickly step inside homes and buildings to talk with residents rather than standing on the street. Soldiers also walked in zigzag lines and moved their heads up and down. Troops continued to patrol streets on foot at night because sniper technology had not achieved precision in the dark.815

Mortar and rocket attacks increased in the first week of November. Exchanges of fire between Sunni and Shi’ite neighborhoods in Baghdad lit up the night, according to the Los Angeles Times. Mortar fire between Kadhimiya and Adhamiya left several dead and dozens injured. Mortar rounds also fell on a soccer field in Sadr City, killing eight. Mortar rounds struck the downtown Shorja wholesale market, killing two people and injuring eight. A mortar round also struck near the Health Ministry, killing three and injuring six. The government downplayed the sectarian violence between neighborhoods, and blamed the mortar attacks on Sunni insurgents in Taji.814

AP reported in mid November that mortar rounds became almost a daily occurrence between neighborhoods in Baghdad. Sectarian violence in the capital drove most Sunnis and Shi’a to relocate to sectarian enclaves, and mortar attacks became the new deadly tactic when entering neighborhoods of the opposite sect was too dangerous. Mortar rounds caused significant civilian casualties in November, and gave another example of the move towards widespread civil conflict.815

Insurgents also coordinated mortar attacks with car bombs in the attack on Sadr City on November 24 and the attack on Shi’ite markets in central Baghdad on December 2. On December 5, two mortar rounds landed on a market, killing two people and wounding five in northern Baghdad and mortar rounds hit a market killing two people and wounding 10 others in Qahira district in northern Baghdad. The following day mortar rounds fell on a busy commercial district of central Baghdad, killing 10 people and wounding 54.

Attacks on the media increased in the fall of 2006 as international watch groups expressed serious concern. The majority of media victims were Iraqi as insurgents attacked anyone who appeared to support the Shi’ite led government. Shi’ite militias also reportedly attacked Sunni-led media stations.

On November 15, gunmen killed journalist Fadia Johammed al-Taie in Mosul. She worked for the independent weekly newspaper al-Massar. The same day in Baquba, gunmen killed Luma al-Karkhi, who worked for the independent weekly al-Dustor. According to an AP count, 91 journalists had been killed since the US led invasion in 2003.816 Only two days later Fadiya Muhammad Abid – who also worked for al-Massar – was killed by gunmen in east Mosul.817

According to the New York based Committee to Protect Journalists, 26 journalists were killed in Iraq in 2006 – the highest number in any year of the war. Of the 91 killed, 64 were Iraqi. There were also seven journalists kidnapped in 2006 and 43 since the war began.818

On November 20, gunmen killed much-loved Iraqi comedian Waleed Hassan on his way to work. Hassan produced a television show that comedied the crisis in Iraq and allowed Iraqis to laugh at their situation – if only for a half hour every evening.819 On November 22, gunmen killed Ra’ad Jafar Hamadi, a journalist working for the al-Sabah newspaper.820 On December 3, Gunmen shot dead Iraqi journalist Nabil al Dulaimi working for a local radio station.

The UN Assistance Mission to Iraq Human Rights Report for September – October stated that the most media workers had been killed in the conflict in Iraq since WWII. The report said that
six journalists were killed in September and twelve in October and two media houses were attacked in October – Al-Shaabiya satellite TV on October 11 and Al-Iraqiya satellite TV on October 29. UNAMI also reported that journalists were being prosecuted for alleged defamation of state officials. Many media workers fled Iraq in 2006 while others chose to maintain a low profile.\textsuperscript{821}

\textbf{Attacks through January 2007}

MNF-Iraq spokesman Gen. Caldwell said in December 27 press briefing, “Significant challenges do remain, and violence is likely to remain at unacceptably high levels in the very near term, but Iraqi forces are making progress to provide their own security and the Iraqi people are demonstrating great resolve to defeat these terrorists and criminals plaguing Iraq.”\textsuperscript{822}

Various forms of “cleansing” became as important as major overt acts of violence as given sides attempted to dominate the other or push them out of areas where they had the majority or had superior power. These forms of “soft” ethnic cleansing included threats, physical intimidation, blackmail, seizure of property, raids on homes and businesses, use of checkpoints to push other factions out, kidnappings and extortion, misuse of government offices and police, and disappearances.

Killing and casualties were only part of the story, and the map of sectarian and ethnic violence was far broader than the major incidents of violence reported by the MNF-I and Iraqi government. There was no accurate data of such dead and wounded because they cannot be counted with any reliability even in the Baghdad area.

Bombings continued to be a source of large scale attacks in Baghdad. Suicide bombers, IEDs, and car bombs all took a heavy toll on Iraqi civilians and US forces in the winter of 2007. US forces said they saw an increase in anti-tank mines, which were harder to detect and avoid. 1\textsuperscript{st} Sgt. Michael Clemens stated, “We used to be pretty good about finding IED tripwires and such. But since they started using anti-tank mines, that hasn’t worked so well.”\textsuperscript{823} The Pentagon also launched an initiative to develop radio systems immune to jamming signals used by troops against enemy IEDs.\textsuperscript{824}

The sniper problem for US and Iraqi forces continued to increase. Snipers were prevalent not only in Baghdad, but in Anbar and Diyala Provinces as well. In the majority of the cases, snipers were Sunni insurgents. The increased accuracy took a heavy emotional and physical toll on US troops and contributed to December being the deadliest month for the US in 2006.

The \textit{Los Angeles Times} reported in late December 2006 that snipers targeted the marine supply route in Anbar province. Two marines were killed in two weeks on the stretch of road east of Falluja used to transport supplies in and out of Anbar. Marines used the road 24 hours a day and were constantly on the lookout for roadside bombs, but the snipers were rarely spotted in time.

The insurgents used a new tactic of planting fake roadside bombs and when marines approached to dismantle them, and sniper would take his shot. Marines believed that insurgents used low buildings along the highway to make these fake bombs and a raid proved them correct, but higher authorities would not allow the buildings to be torn down.

Medics working in Anbar said that snipers had improved their accuracy significantly. They knew where marines were not covered by metal plates, and precisely targeted these vulnerable spots.
Marines also became better at killing and capturing the snipers, but as one marine said, “We take one off, there seems to be another to take his place.”

825
Figure III.1: Total Average Weekly Attacks versus Effective Attacks by Time Period: February 2004 – November 2005

Source: Adapted from material provided by Brian Hartman, ABC News

Week of 4 NOV 05:
- 647 Attacks Overall
  Up 12% (577 last week)
- 148 Effective Attacks
  Up 7% (138 last week)
- Effectiveness Rate: 23%
  (last week: 24%)
Figure III.2: Attacks by Iraqi Governorate or Province: August 29, 2005 to January 20, 2006

Figure III.3: Daily Attacks per Capita by Province: February 11, 2006-May 12, 2006

Figure III.4: Approximate Number of Major Attacks per Month: June 2003-February 2005

Note: Includes approximate number of attacks on Coalition, Iraqi security forces, Iraqi government officials, civilians, and infrastructure.

Figure III.5: Average Weekly Attacks by Time Period: January 2004 – November 2006


Data points are estimates from figure included in the above-mentioned DoD reports.

Note: The May and August 2006 documents did not include a “Baseline” period.
Figure III.6: Total Attacks by Province: May-November 2006


Data points are estimates from figure included in the DoD report.
Figure III.7: Average Significant Attacks in Major Iraqi Cities September 2005-November 2006

Source: Material adapted from information provided Hans Fah, a security and intelligence consultant working in support of private sector reconstruction programs in Iraq. Data has been drawn from both open source and on the ground protective security networks. Personal correspondence of the author, December 13, 2006. Used with permission.
Figure III.8: Sectarian Incidents 2005-2006

Figure III.9: Ethno-Sectarian Incidents and Executions, January – October 2006


Note: Ethno-sectarian incidents and execution recorded in MNC-I Significant Activities Database. Ethno-sectarian incidents are threats and violence with apparent sectarian motivations. Multiple casualties can results for a single incident. Ethno-sectarian executions are murders with distinct characterisitics, and are a subset of total civilian casualties.
Total Improvised Explosive Device (IED) Bombings, Vehicle Borne Bombings (VBIEDs), and Suicide Bombings

The broad patterns in improvised explosive device (IED) bombings, vehicle borne bombings (VBIEDs), and suicide bombings have been discussed in the previous chapter, but the trend data again provide useful insights. The trends in the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) are shown in Figure III.7, and the patterns in casualties are shown in Figure III.8.

As has been discussed earlier, these patterns fluctuate over time, but showed a steady increase, and a significant rise in successful detonations towards the end of 2005. Figure III.8 also shows an increase in US deaths from such IEDs, although the number did drop in early 2006. By mid March, President Bush stated that nearly half of all IEDs were found and disabled before they could detonate, and in the 18 months prior, the casualty rate of IEDs had been cut in half. Even so, it is apparent that the military cannot develop ways to detect and diffuse IEDs quicker than the enemy can replace them.

Attacks in 2005

According to Central Command, IED attacks nearly doubled between 2004 and 2005 going from 5,607 to 10,953. According to the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO) established by the DoD, from April 2004 to April 2006 there was a 45% decrease in the rate of IED casualties. The number of IEDs intercepted or defused is shown in Figure III.9

The patterns in suicide attacks, car bombings, the resulting casualties, the numbers of bomb makers captured and killed, and the number of car bombs defused and intercepted are more complex, and are shown in Figures III.10, III.11 III.12 and III.13. While some of these figures cover only through 2005 and others encompass 2006, they do show interesting trends. The number of attacks dropped from a high in early 2005, but the number of casualties did not. As is often the case with trends in an insurgency, there is no clear correlation between the two trends. The trend for bombers captured or killed is of interest largely because, while the number is rising, the overall total has been and remains so low.

If one looks at data from other sources, the number of car bombings rose from 65 in February 2005 to 170 in April, and the total number of major attacks per day rose from 30-40 in February and March to 70 in April and May. The intensity of the attacks also increased as more suicide bombings took place by Islamist extremists – many conducted by young men from countries like Libya, Saudi Arabia, and the Sudan who infiltrated in from across the Syria border.

The number of major attacks involving suicide bombers rose from 25% in February to a little over 50% in April. There were 69 suicide bombings in April 2005, more than in the entire period from the fall of Saddam Hussein to the transfer of power in June 2004. In May, some 90-suicide bombings were the primary cause of some 750 casualties that month. The annual pattern was equally serious. If one only counts car bombings, there had been more than 482 successful bombings in the year since the handover of power on June 26, 2004, killing at least 2,176 people and wounding at least 5,536.

While the insurgents focused more on Iraqi targets, and increasingly on Shi’ite and Kurdish targets that might help provoke a major civil war, the attacks on MNF-I forces climbed from 40 a
day in March to 55 in April, far below the peak of 130 a day before the January 30, 2005 elections – but scarcely reassuring. The good news for the US was that only 146 Americans died during the three-month period from February 1 to April 30, 2005, versus 315 in the previous three-month period.

The difficulty in analyzing the patterns in a constantly changing situation is illustrated by another surge in activity that took place as the new government was appointed. The Iraqi government announced most of its appointments on April 28, 2005 -- some three months after the election and months after the supposed deadline for doing so.

In the week that followed (April 28-May 6), there were 10 major suicide bombings, and 35 major attacks. Insurgents killed more than 270 Iraqi civilians, and at least 14 bodies were found in a Baghdad garbage dump that may have been from previous attacks. Many of the attacks were against Iraqi forces and recruits, and the intensity of the attacks is indicated by the fact that a suicide bomber from the "Army of Ansar al-Sunna" killed more that 60 people in the Kurdish city of Irbil in Northern Iraq in a single attack. For the first time, in April, more than 50% of the car bombings were suicide attacks.

These developments led some US officers and officials to claim that the insurgents were lashing out because they had taken so many casualties that they were desperate, and/or to say that the successful car bombings by Islamic extremists had little strategic meaning since they alienated the Iraqi people and could easily be carried out by a small number of largely foreign volunteers that were not representative of Iraqi Sunnis.

Such arguments could not be disproved or proved, but they were made at a time the US Marines found it necessary to conduct a major offensive along the Euphrates from Haditha to the Syrian border, the largest offensive since the attack on Fallujah. US forces also had to launch another major operation to secure the area south and west of Baghdad, and follow them up with a series of major campaigns around Mosul and in western Iraq during the summer and fall.

These operations had to be followed up again and again; largely because many of the insurgents could disperse the moment they came under pressure. Also, the Coalition and Iraqi forces both lacked the manpower to occupy high threat areas and the requisite Coalition or Iraqi government teams to back up tactical victories with civic action programs and efforts to establish effective governance.

The insurgents and terrorists continued to try to strip the new government of its perceived legitimacy. In spite of MNF-I estimates that some 1,000-3,000 insurgents were being killed and captured each month, attacks on Iraqi security forces and government officials continued, and the number of suicide bombings continued to mount.

This is clear from the summary data provided in the previous chapter and from the patterns in bombings revealed similar cycles for the rest of 2005 --although considerable uncertainty sometimes emerged over such counts because the Iraqi government and Coalition did not report consistently. There were 21 car bombings in Baghdad alone during the first two weeks of May, and 126 in the 80 days before May 18th. This compared with 25 during all of 2004. Daily attacks had averaged 30-40 a day in February, but were at least 70 a day in June. Although the number of car bombings decreased from April to July 2005, (from April’s high of 170 car bombings, the number fell to 151 in May; 133 in June; and less than 100 in July) at the time, experts believed this was merely al Qa’ida “storing up” for the late summer and fall offensive.
The cycles were equally uncertain for the rest of year. Coalition reporting in December 2005 showed a drop in the number of suicide bombings from 70 in May to 40 in August, a rise to 50 in October, and then a drop to 23 in November. The number of bombs exploded or cleared rose from 1,170 in June to 1,869 in October, and then dropped to 1,330 roadside bombings and 68 car bombings in November. There had been 130 car bombings in February. The US death toll rose from 49 in September to 96 in October, and then dropped to 85 in November. By the end November, the US had lost 80 or more dead in 10 of the 33 months of the war. Iraqi deaths went from 69 in August to 356 in September and 290 in November.
Figure III.10: Patterns of IED Attacks: January 2004 to October 2005

Source: Adapted from material provided by Brian Hartman, ABC News
Figure III.11: Cumulative Summary of IED attacks and IEDs found in Baghdad, 2006

Source: Material adapted from information provided in personal correspondence of the author, December 13, 2006.
Figure III.12: US IED Deaths: July 2003 to November 2006

Source: Adapted from material provided by Iraq Coalition Casualties, data as of November 30, 2006, available at: http://icasulaties.org/oif/IED.aspx.
Attacks in 2006

No explanation is provided of the major drop in car bombs intercepted and defused showed in Figure III.13 (from 26% from 29 August 2005-10 February 2006 to 15% in 11 February-12 May). The percentage data on IEDs detected and defused shown above in Figure III.9 say nothing about casualty trends, assume all IEDs are detected at some point, and ignore the fact the trend may be a reflection of a shift in attacks to Iraqi targets. No trend or casualty data are provided on the number of all forms of attacks. Much of the data included in these DoD reports is “cherry picked” with no overall meaning or context.

The average number of American troops killed per month by hostile fire declined in the summer of 2006. Thirty-eight US soldiers were killed in action in July, compared to 42 in January—partly reflecting advances in armor and defense. However, the average number of daily attacks targeting US and Iraqi soldiers and police increased by 44 percent from June 2005 to June 2006, rising from 61 to 88. And the number of wounded increased to 518 in July, up from 287 in July. Explosive devices were responsible for slightly over half of the deaths. Over the summer, improvised explosive device (IED) attacks had increased to about four times their recorded levels in January 2004. The number of attacks directed at American and Iraqi military forces involving mortars, rocket-propelled grenades and small-caliber weapons have also increased.

There were 1,481 IED attacks throughout Iraq in June, and 903 instances in which the bombs were found and neutralized, according to figures compiled by the American military in Baghdad. The figures marked a sharp increase since January, when there were 834 such attacks and 620 cases in which the bombs were found before they exploded.
In July, the number of IED attacks rose to 2,625, of which 1,666 exploded, and 959 were discovered and neutralized before they went off. The figures indicated that the number of roadside bomb attacks had more than doubled since January when 1,454 bombs exploded or were found.\textsuperscript{846}

According to a spokesman for the military command in Baghdad, 70 percent of the 1,666 bombs that exploded in July were targeting the American-led military force. Twenty percent were directed at Iraqi security forces, representing a 9 percent increase from 2005. And 10 percent of the bombs struck civilians, twice the rate from 2005.\textsuperscript{847}

In August, around 1,200 IEDs were detonated, according to retired Army general Montgomery Meigs, head of the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization. Meigs said that despite the increase in the number of roadside bombs, nearly half were found and neutralized before they exploded, and the number of casualties incurred from such explosions remained relatively constant before they edged upward in recent months.\textsuperscript{848} “We’re making slow, grudging progress,” Meigs said, but forecast that his organization would “do better over time.”\textsuperscript{849}

Challenges faced by US efforts to curb the number of IED attacks in Iraq included:

- A recent decline in the number of tips from Iraqis that the military could act upon, known as “actionable intelligence.” While tips increased from 4,000 in January to a peak of 5,900 in April, they sharply declined in July to around 3,700.\textsuperscript{850}
- The relatively widespread supply of artillery shells in the country, as well as an array of means to detonate them.\textsuperscript{851}
- The adaptability of insurgents to revise their tactics. According to Meigs, insurgents change triggers for IEDs every six to nine months to stay ahead of US military countermeasures.\textsuperscript{852}

The frequency of IED attacks was generally considered a significant indicator of the evolving strength of the insurgency since setting up roadside bombs required a network of operatives including a bomb-maker, financiers to fund the operation, and individuals who planted the explosives, and set them off when the troops were approaching.\textsuperscript{853}

Meigs said that among the most lethal bombs were “explosively formed penetrators,” which could penetrate through an inch of steel. He added that attacks aimed at the bottom of armored vehicles have increased, particularly in Sunni areas of Iraq, and in Baghdad where coalition forces have concentrated their efforts to curb violence.

The Defense Department was arming around 30,000 Humvees with new armored doors, and allocated $1.43 billion for jammers that disrupt electronic signals used to detonate bombs as part of its efforts to address the dangers of roadside bombs.\textsuperscript{854}

The August 2006 Pentagon Quarterly Report to Congress on Iraq indicated that the number of car bombs increased in the period from May 20-August 11, 2006 to levels last seen in the summer of 2004. According to the report, car bombs were largely centered on Baghdad, Mosul, Kirkuk, and the Western Euphrates valley, and were primarily directed toward civilians or Iraqi Security Force checkpoints.\textsuperscript{855}

The rising number of attacks on US and Iraqi forces contributed to the growing body of data and intelligence analysis that painted an increasingly sober picture of the levels of violence in Iraq. A senior Defense Department official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said, “The
insurgency has gotten worse by almost all measures, with insurgent attacks at historically high levels.”

A nine-page classified report by the Defense Intelligence Agency that came out on August 3, titled “Iraq Update,” compiled recent empirical data on the number of attacks, bombings, murders, and other acts of violence, and included diagrams of actors involved in insurgent and sectarian attacks. According to several officials who read the document or received a briefing on its contents, it detailed deteriorating security conditions in Iraq and described the escalating risk of civil war.

General Meigs said the large numbers of unclaimed explosives in Iraq made it very easy for insurgents to build IEDs. According to British military intelligence, “there are enough stocks of illegal explosives to continue the same level of attack for 274 years without re-supply.” The deadliest IEDs in 2006 were “clusters of artillery shells or other high explosives buried in roadways,” said Meigs. In Baghdad, insurgents began using explosively formed penetrators (EFPs) in 2005. EFPs are far smaller than IEDs and are ideal for the city roads, and they are difficult to combat because they are impossible to jam. Meigs said that primarily Shi’a militia groups used the EFPs. To address the augmented IED dangers the US military:

- Increased the protection of military vehicles by giving 30,000 humvees new armored doors. The Military also said that they spent $1.4 billion in 2006 on jammers that disrupt electronic signals used to detonate the bombs. $613 million on “neutralizing” (exploding) IEDs, and $470 million on surveillance technology. The Defense Department also sent humvees to Iraq with V-shaped hulls to disperse the blast from the IEDs.
- Adopted new training techniques in response to insurgent attacks in October 2006.
- Attacked insurgents based on tips from the Iraqi public. The military said tips peaked in April 2006 with 5,900 being reported.

In mid-September 2006, a GAO report assessing security in Iraq stated that from 2004 to 2005, insurgent attacks increased by 23%, but then fell in the fall of 2005. The insurgency gained speed again in the first six month of 2006 when attacks were up 57% from the same period in 2005; July 2006 saw the highest number of insurgent attacks since the invasion in 2003. Several provinces in particular experienced the brunt of the increased attacks: Baghdad, Ninewa, Salahuddin, Anbar, and Diyala.

In the first week of October the US military announced that roadside bombings in Baghdad had reached an all time high in 2006. The majority of the bombs were attributed to sectarian militias in the capital. US military spokesman Major General William Caldwell said that the number of casualties – although high – was not proportional to the large increase in the number of attacks.
Figure III.14: Patterns in Car Bombings and Suicide Bombings: May-October 2005 – Part One

Casualties

![Bar chart showing casualties for May to October 2005]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>3208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>2856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>2695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>2140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept</td>
<td>3038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>2746</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vehicle Borne IEDs

![Bar chart showing VBIEDs for May to October 2005]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>VBIEDs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>96</td>
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<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>73</td>
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<td>July</td>
<td>60</td>
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<td>August</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure III.15: Patterns in Car Bombings and Suicide Bombings: May – October 2005 – Part Two

Suicide Attacks in 2005

Car Bombings in 2005

Source: Adapted from material provided by Brian Hartman, ABC News
Figure III.16: Percent of Car Bombs Intercepted/Defused: April 2005 – January 2006


Figure III.17: Percent of Car Bombs Intercepted/Defused: November 2004 – May 2006

Sabotage and Infrastructure Attacks

The impact of insurgent attacks on infrastructure has also been discussed in the previous chapter, but Figures III.14 and III.15 provide trend lines that show how insurgents continued attacks designed to disrupt supplies of water, electricity, crude oil, gasoline and heating oil, particularly in the greater Baghdad area. The shift in attack patterns do show significant cycles, but cannot be related to the effectiveness of such attacks, and seems to reflect a massive undercount of large numbers of minor sabotage attempts and success that are not included in these figures. Map III.1 shows the location of Iraqi oilfields and pipelines.

In a report to Congress in February 2006, the Department of Defense indicated that while attacks on Iraq’s infrastructure “account for an extremely small portion” of overall attacks and continued to go down, “the severity of the attacks has gone up” and the “enemy has become more proficient at targeting critical infrastructure vulnerabilities and at intimidating workers, such as truck drivers, who are essential to distribution of oil and essential services.”861 In March of 2006, Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch indicated that attacks on infrastructure had declined 60% in the past three months. He attributed this to the increased presence of Iraqi security forces, then 250,000, around the country in general.862

If one looks at the history of such attacks in more detail, one finds the following patterns:

- Attacks on power and water facilities both offset the impact of US aid and cause Iraqi anger against the government. Al Qa’ida and Ba’athist groups found oil facilities and pipelines to be particularly attractive targets because they deny the government revenue (in the first quarter of FY 2005 Iraq lost an estimated $887 million in export revenues due to insurgent attacks on infrastructure)863, affect both power and Iraqi ability to obtain fuel, get extensive media and foreign business attention, and prevent investment in one of Iraq’s most attractive assets.864

The impact of this activity is regularly reflected in the histograms in the Department of Defense, Iraq Weekly Status Report. For example, the April 27, 2005 edition shows that electric power generation remained far below the US goal, and usually below the prewar level, from January 1, 2004 to April 21, 2005. Crude oil production averaged around 2.1 MMBD from February through April 2005, versus a goal of 2.5 MMBD, and a prewar peak of 2.5 MMBD in March 2003. For September-October 2005, the crude oil production average fell to 2.02 MMBD, still below the target goal of 2.5MMBD.865 Exports averaged only about 1.3-1.4 MMBD from January to April 2005, largely because of pipeline and facility sabotage -- although record oil prices raised Iraqi export revenues from $5.1 billion in 2003 to $17.0 billion in 2004, and $6.2 billion in the first four months of 2005. From May to September 2005, Iraqi oil exports averaged 1.42 MMBD. The increase was driven largely by strong exports (over 1.5 MMBD) for the months of July-September. Early estimates for October 2005, however, showed oil exports falling to 1.305 MMBD.866

The continuing threat to electric facilities forced many Iraqis to rely on home or neighborhood generators even in the areas with power It was also a reason that the US was only able to spend $1.0 billion of $4.4 billion in programmed aid money on the electricity sector by the end of April 2005, and $261 million out of $1.7 billion on the petroleum sector. 867

Sabotage and theft helped cripple many of the country’s 229 operating water plants by the spring of 2005, and some 90% of the municipalities in the country lacked working sewage processing plants, contaminating the main sources of water as they drained into the Tigris and Euphrates. The Iraqi Municipalities and Public Works Ministry calculated in April 2005 that it provided water to some 17 million Iraqis (70% of the population), and supplies were so bad that some 30% of the 17 million did not have access to drinkable water.868

In June, Baghdad’s mayor, Alaa Mahmoud al-Timimi threatened to resign over crumbling infrastructure in the city. On September 7, a Congressional mandated report stated that the ongoing insurgency had severely hampered efforts to rebuild Iraq’s water and sanitation systems. Of the more than $24 billion the US
Congress has authorized for reconstruction efforts since 2003, roughly $2.6 billion was allotted for rebuilding water and sanitation services. Congress had initially planned on spending almost $4 billion on water and sanitation projects, but more than $1 billion was eventually redirected towards other priorities, including security needs.\(^{869}\)

Despite this, some progress appears to have been made in Baghdad. In October 2005, US AID announced that more than 15,650 houses had recently been connected to the Baghdad Water Distribution System. But the distribution system experiences 60 percent loss, a result of leaks, illegal connections and sabotage.\(^{870}\)

And, as late as September 2005, several water and sewage stations in Fallujah were still operating below 20% capacity.\(^{871}\)

The patterns of such attacks also continued to come in cycles. For example, Figure III.10 shows that insurgent attacks on infrastructure targets increased dramatically in the run-up to the October 2005 referendum.

Oil pipelines in the northern part of the country have come under repeated attack. According to Iraqi Oil Minister Ibrahim Bahr al-Ulum, the upsurge in attacks began in mid-August 2005, following the deadline for writing Iraq’s Constitution. Between August 15 and September 7, there were more than 10 attacks on pipelines.\(^{872}\)

The situation continued to deteriorate as the date of the referendum approached. The pipelines, linking oil fields in Kirkuk to Iraq’s largest oil refinery in Beiji and the Turkish port of Cheyhan, were disrupted more than half-a-dozen times during September and October 2005:\(^{873}\)

- September 3, 2005: Insurgents bombed the main pipeline running from Kirkuk to Cheyhan, disrupting Iraqi oil exports for more than two weeks and costing billions of dollars in lost revenue.
- September 13, 2005: A fire broke out after a pipeline carrying crude oil from Kirkuk to a Beiji refinery sprang a leak.
- September 15, 2005: Another fire broke out an oil pipeline in Kirkuk; the cause of the fire was unknown.
- September 21, 2005: A bomb planted by insurgents damaged an oil pipeline connecting the Bay Hassan oil fields to Kirkuk. Repairs were expected to take up to a week.
- October 6, 2005: Insurgents bombed a pipeline near Kirkuk.
- October 12, 2005: An explosion shut down an oil pipeline near the city of Beiji.
- October 20, 2005: Insurgents bombed a pipeline linking Kirkuk to Beiji.
- October 25, 2005: Insurgents bombed the Beiji petroleum refinery, killing at least five.

On the eve of the October referendum, insurgents attacked Baghdad’s electrical grid. In a tactic designed to disrupt the vote, insurgents sabotaged power lines and electricity towers north of the capital, leaving 70 percent of the city in the dark.\(^{874}\) Even before the attack, however, the amount of electricity Baghdad received was a major bone of contention, with daily electricity service in the capital averaging less than 8 hours per day compared to the national average of 14 hours.\(^{875}\)

The insurgents scarcely paralyzed the country, but had notable successes in many areas. These included significant attacks on oil export facilities, water plants, and power. For example, the national average amount of electricity generated reached a post-war high in August 2004 with 4,707 megawatts, but steadily declined throughout the rest of 2004 and most of 2005 as a result of successful insurgent attacks on electricity and oil infrastructure.\(^{876}\) Because of the technological expertise involved in these attacks, some experts believed that former, Hussein-era officials were still aiding the sabotage efforts – although others felt that by this time, there was a large pool of such expertise in the various insurgent forces.\(^{877}\)
Insurgents carried out more than 300 attacks on Iraqi oil facilities between March 2003 and January 2006. The end result was that oil production dropped by 8% in 2005, and pipeline shipments through the Iraqi northern pipeline to Ceyan in Turkey dropped from 800,000 barrels per day before the war to an average of 40,000 barrels per day in 2005. In July 2005, Iraqi officials estimated that insurgent attacks had already cost Iraq some $11 billion. They had kept Iraqi oil production from approaching the 3 million barrel a day goal in 2005 that the Coalition had set after the fall of Saddam Hussein.

Production had dropped from pre-war levels of around 2.5 million barrels a day to an average of 1.83 million barrels a day in 2005, and a level of only 1.57 million barrels a day in December 2005. In a report to Congress, the Department of Defense stated that oil production and exports fell from an average of 2.1 and 1.4 million barrels-per-day in October 2005, to 1.9 and 1.2 million barrels-per-day in January 2006, respectively. The same report cited sabotage as one of several factors contributing to the continuing difficulty in delivering adequate electrical power to Iraqis.

The impact of such attacks was compounded the ability of insurgents to steal oil and fuel. The New York Times has quoted Ali Allawi, Iraq's finance minister, as estimating that insurgents were taking some 40 percent to 50 percent of all oil-smuggling profits in the country, and had infiltrated senior management positions at the major northern refinery in Baji: "It's gone beyond Nigeria levels now where it really threatens national security...The insurgents are involved at all levels." The Times also quoted an unidentified US official as saying that, "It's clear that corruption funds the insurgency, so there you have a very real threat to the new state...Corruption really has the potential of undercutting the growth potential here." The former oil minister, Ibrahim Bahr al-Ulum, had said earlier in 2005 that, "oil and fuel smuggling networks have grown into a dangerous mafia threatening the lives of those in charge of fighting corruption."

As a tangible example of such problems, Radhi Hamza al-Radhi, the chairman of Iraq's Commission on Public Integrity, announced in early February 2006 that Meshaan al-Juburi, a member of the new Iraqi National Assembly had been indicted earlier in December for stealing millions of dollars from the funds that were supposed to pay Sunni tribes to protect a critical oil pipeline against attacks and was suspected of giving some of the funds to insurgents.

Juburi was a Sunni who had broken with Saddam Hussein in 1989, and fled the country. He had been active in the opposition to Saddam before the invasion, and had tried to take control of Mosul after Saddam's fall. He was a member of the Juburi tribe, which had members in this insurgency, and had been asked to organize 17 battalions of soldiers to protect the pipeline in 2004.

He was accused of both taking much of the money that was supposed to go to these pipeline protection units, and allowing insurgents to play a role in the oil protection battalions. He may have created some 200-300 phantom members of each 1,000-man battalion to take the money
allotted for the pay and food for non-existent security personnel. He also may have set up ambushes so the insurgents could seize weapons being delivered to the units.

Ali Ahmed al-Wazir, the commander of the second battalion of the first brigade of the Special Infrastructure Brigades, based in the Wadi Zareitoun district, was identified as the battalion commander hired by Mr. Juburi, and who organized insurgent attacks on the pipeline. It was reported that both Juburi and his son had fled the country just after they were indicted.

At nearly the same time, the director of a major oil storage plant near Kirkuk was arrested with other employees and several local police officials, charged with helping to orchestrate a mortar attack on the plant on February 2, 2006.882

In May 2006, the Department of Defense offered an updated reassessment of the state of Iraqi infrastructure and insurgent attempts to derail reconstruction efforts in its report to Congress. It specifically noted that Iraqi oil production was at 1.9mbpd during the first four months of 2006, short of the 2.5 mbpd goal of the Iraqi Oil Ministry.883 It said that the limited production and exports were the result of, “Poor weather and a lack of storage facilities in the South, and pipeline maintenance challenges and sabotage in the north.” It continued that goals in this area “continued to be hampered by intimidation of workers and terrorist attacks on infrastructure…Poor maintenance practices, logistical bottlenecks, inadequate capital investment, increased demand and terrorist attacks on oil plants and pipelines.”884

In general however, attacks against infrastructure had declined since August 2005, and by May 2006 accounted for only 1% of all insurgent attacks. This is reflected in the data in Figure III.15. The DoD report to Congress noted that lack of sufficient progress in energy infrastructure was “not due to insurgent attacks, but rather to such factors as inadequate maintenance and inadequate capital investments in the transmission infrastructure.”885 It also noted the differences between insurgent attacks and the general criminal activity that hampered reconstruction saying, “The relatively small number of infrastructure attacks has a disproportionate impact in part because infrastructure repair is hampered by insurgent and criminal intimidation of repair contractors and maintenance workers.”886

A mid September 2006 GAO report stated that attacks did continue on infrastructure targets, particularly oil pipelines and electrical transmission lines; oil revenue remained below the Oil Ministry’s goal for this reason. Electrical reconstruction projects were hindered by poor security conditions as well and contractors acknowledged having to reduce the scope of or cancel several projects.887

The November Department of Defense Stability and Security Report stated that infrastructure attacks decreased to an average of one per week on “infrastructure providing essential services.” The report added, however, “the present rate of infrastructure attacks, couples with a security environment that has hampered repairs, weak ministerial oversight, and ineffectual rapid-repair teams, has proved a major impediment to improving the supply of essential services.”888

Insurgents destroyed numerous electricity towers leading into Baghdad in late 2006, leaving the capital with little outside sources of electricity; most people relied on generators.

A serious attack on oil infrastructure occurred on January 11, 2007. The Northern Oil Co. announced that suspected Sunni insurgents attacked an oil pipeline delivering oil to Turkey from fields around Kirkuk. The pipeline was severely damaged and continued to burn several hours after the attack. Pipelines running to Turkey were subject to frequent attacks in earlier years of
the war, but increased security of pipelines led to a slight decline in late 2006. Iraq began exporting oil to Turkey in September 2006 after a hiatus due to attacks. 889
Figure III.18: Average Monthly Attacks on Infrastructure by Time Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Pre-Sovereignty</th>
<th>Sovereignty</th>
<th>Election</th>
<th>Pre-Constitution</th>
<th>Referendum</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jul-Oct 04</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 04-Jan 05</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept-Oct 05</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure III.19: Average Weekly Attacks on Infrastructure by Time Period: January 1, 2004 – August 11, 2006


Data points are estimates from figure included in the DoD report.

Note: Averages rounded to the nearest whole number.
Figure III.20: Attacks on Iraqi Oil and Gas Pipelines, Installations, and Personnel: June 2003-November 2006

Measuring the Evolution of the Insurgency by Its Cost in Blood

The human cost of the insurgency is only one measure of how it has evolved, but it makes the seriousness of the conflict all too clear. The number of US, Coalition, and Iraqi casualties tended to rise as the insurgency became more intense, but casualty rates did not alter in predictable ways. In broad terms casualties tended to rise over time, but shifted from Coalition-dominated casualty lists to a steadily higher number of Iraqi casualties as Iraqi forces came on line and as the insurgents shifted their target base to other Iraqis in an effort to prevent the Iraqi government from becoming effective and to cause a civil war.

These trends are much clearer in the broad cycles in both Coalition and Iraqi military casualties shown in Figure III.16. In spite of minor variations in the estimates by source and date, Figure III.16 shows that a steady rise in total Coalition and Iraqi casualties took place from the start of the insurrection through the constitutional referendum, with the rise in Iraqi casualties more than compensating for the drop in Coalition casualties.

Patterns in Coalition Casualties

Coalition casualties are only available in terms of deaths, and do not distinguish total killed from killed in action, or show allied wounded. Figure III.17 shows the pattern in all Coalition deaths by month from the invasion to early 2006. There is a slow upward trend through mid-2005, but the patterns vary sharply from month to month. They also become more consistent after mid-2005, in part because the US stopped fighting large urban battles.

Figure III.18 shows casualties by Iraqi governorate. The data in this figure clearly show that the insurgency has been concentrated in the Sunni provinces in the West – Anbar, Salahideen, and Ninawah (Mosul) -- and Baghdad. The Kurdish areas have been far more secure, and so have most provinces in the south. Basra has been a partial exception. Such data highlight the fact that the insurgency has been largely Sunni Arab, and concentrated in only four of Iraq’s 18 governorates, rather than national.
Figure III.21: Casualty Patterns in Iraqi and Coalition Forces Over Time

A: MNSTC-I Estimate of Daily Killed and Wounded


Data points are estimates from figure included in the above-mentioned DoD reports.

Note: The data are derived from unverified initial reports submitted by Coalition elements responding to an incident. These numbers should be used for comparative purposes only.
Figure III.22: Coalition Deaths By Month and Nationality: March 2003 to January 2007

Source: Adapted from material provided by Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, data as of January 24, 2007, available at: http://icasualties.org/oif/
Figure III.23: Coalition Casualties by Iraqi Governorate or Province

Source: Adapted from material provided by Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, data as of January 24, 2007, available at: http://icasualties.org/oif/Province.aspx.
US Casualties

The trends in US casualties are shown in Figures III.19 and III.20. Figure III.19 shows just how important it is to include the number of wounded and to distinguish how serious the wound is. These data make it clear that there are nearly seven times as many US wounded as killed, but that military medicine and protection gear has advanced to the point where less than half of the wounded cannot be returned to combat. This is a major advance over previous wars.\(^{890}\)

Figure III.20 again shows that there are major cycles in the trend. For example, there were 12 months from March 2003 to November 2005, where US fatalities per month were greater than 75. During that same period, there were three months (April 2004; November 2004; and, January 2005) where US fatalities were greater than 100.\(^{891}\)

There are many other examples of such cyclical variations that occur when one looks beyond monthly patterns.

Rather than experience a decline, the average number of casualties per day had grown from 1.7 in 2003 to 2.3 in 2004, and then remained relatively constant in 2005. January 26, 2005 -- just before the election -- was the worst day of the war to date with 37 American dead. Seventeen American’s died on a single day on August 3, 2005, and 29 on March 23, 2005.\(^{892}\)

In mid-November 2005 the US military reported that the survival rate for wounded soldiers was 90 percent, the highest yet. The army credited the high survival rate to better body armor, forward deployed surgical teams, swift medical evacuations, and improved trauma care.\(^{893}\)

Also in November, the US military reported that more than 200 of the US troops killed to date in Iraq were officers. The figure accounted for 10.4% of deaths in Iraq, a number similar to the casualty rate of pervious wars. Of the 58,178 US soldiers killed in Vietnam, 7,878 or roughly 14%, were officers.

The casualty rate for officers in Iraq appeared to be increasing in late 2005. Between October 25 and November 15, 58 US troops were killed, of which 13, roughly 22%, were officers. But military officials do not believe the recent increase in officer deaths marks a change in insurgent tactics.\(^{894}\)

We have no evidence pointing to the insurgents or terrorists targeting officers as opposed to other members of the military. [Suicide bombs and IEDs] are pretty indiscriminate in what they hit.

Nonetheless, the casualty count for the US steadily declined between October 2005 and March 2006. During this period, it dropped from 96 in October to 31 in March.\(^{895}\) This downward trend was likely the result of both an insurgent switch to “soft” targets including Iraqi police and civilians and also because parts of the country were turned over to Iraqi security forces. Indeed, by April of 2006, Iraqi police, soldiers and civilians were being killed at about a rate of 75 per day.\(^{896}\) In September 2005, Coalition forces absorbed 82% of all attacks and Iraqi’s 18%. By February 2006, 65% were aimed at the Coalition and 35% at Iraqis.\(^{897}\) Still, in the first four days in April the US suffered 14 casualties.\(^{898}\) This indicated that the previous trend may have been temporary and that insurgents still had the capability to carry out successful attacks against Coalition forces.

US forces experienced a steady increase in casualties over the summer 2006 both because of more intense attacks in the west and Operation Together Forward in Baghdad. In August al-Qa’ida in Iraq issued a statement calling on insurgents to increase attacks against US soldiers and 74 US soldiers died during September. The first weekend of October proved particularly deadly – 17 US soldiers were killed in four days. Another five US soldiers died on October 14 and ten were killed on October 17. October was the deadliest month in 2006 with a total of 105 killed. At least one-third of the attacks in October occurred in Baghdad, according to the US military.\(^{899}\)
A news article stated that of the 105 killed, 58 were killed by mines and makeshift bombs, eight were killed by snipers, and 30 died from low intensity fighting. An additional six soldiers died in non-hostile incidents. Furthermore, almost one-third of those killed were on extended or multiple tours. An additional 70 US soldiers died in November – 38 by IEDs.

The rise in attacks occurred despite the fact that the US military was gradually handing over security powers to Iraqi forces. US soldiers continued to die in attacks in the insurgent stronghold in Anbar province. But the driving force behind the increase in casualties was the growth of sectarian militias in Baghdad over the summer 2006 and increased US presence on the streets. In 2006, 40% of US casualties occurred in Anbar.

The *Boston Globe* reported that US forces died from roadside bombs in the fall and early winter of 2006 at a higher rate than any other time in the war. In December, 60% of the 53 casualties by December 16 were from roadside bombs. Throughout the war, roadside bombs caused half of US casualties. Pentagon and US military officials expressed anger at the end of 2006 that the millions spent on research of IEDs led to no new intelligence on how bombers operated. Several congressmen called the Joint IED Defeat Organization a failure at the end of 2006. The organization spent 63% of its budget on ways to “defeat the device,” and 30% on attacking the “network” that plant the bombs.

In the last few days of 2006, the number of US military fatalities reached the 3,000 mark, with 115 killed in December, according to the Iraq Coalition Casualty Count; the Associated Press counted 113 killed in December. Furthermore, according to figures from ICC, December was the deadliest month of the war for US troops from IEDs.

The Department of Defense Stability and Security Report for August-November noted that the majority of attacks, 68%, targeted Coalition forces.

There is a more important message in Figure III.24, however, that if often ignored in both military analysis and the media. Figure III.24 shows that intense combat produces much sharper swings in the number of wounded than in killed. As a result, the number of both killed and wounded is both a much better measure of combat activity and of the sacrifice that military forces make in combat. The failure to report on wounded is incompetent analysis and incompetent reporting.
Figure III.24: US Casualties in the Iraq War: Total Killed vs. Wounded, March 2003- January 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Deaths</th>
<th>Killed in Action</th>
<th>Non-Hostile</th>
<th>Total Wounded</th>
<th>Wounded in Action: RTD</th>
<th>Wounded in Action Non-RTD</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Saddam Fall 1 May 03-Present</td>
<td>2,867</td>
<td>2,313</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>22,292</td>
<td>12,527</td>
<td>9,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invasion 19 Mar-30 Apr 03</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>426</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>3,013</td>
<td>2,428</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>22,834</td>
<td>12,643</td>
<td>10,191</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* Note: Totals do not include casualties in enforcing no fly zones before March 19, 2003. Wounded-RTD = equals lighter wounded where personnel were returned to duty within 72 hours. Wounded-Non-RTD = more serious wounds where solider could not be returned to duty within 72 hours.
Figure III.25: US Casualties in the Iraq War: Killed vs. Wounded, March 2003-December 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>2003</th>
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<td>1424</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec</td>
<td>589</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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Patterns in Iraqi Casualties

Although MNF-I keeps track of Iraqi casualties, it has only recently begun to disclose such numbers in detail. One MNSTC-I expert stated, “Data on Iraqi casualties are collected by the Coalition, but public distribution of information about this topic should remain the purview of the Iraqi government. They have more visibility over the issue, could be more accurate in reporting and are the appropriate authority to discuss the meaning.” Yet, the Iraqi government also seems to be reluctant to release casualty data, and when it does, the reporting is widely inconsistent. Tolls submitted by different ministries often vary. In addition, a number of NGOs have been working to track Iraqi casualties independently, and while some of their data are useful, the accuracy of their casualty tallies is highly questionable. Iraqi deaths increased again in July with 1063 civilians killed and 217 police or military killed in action. In August the number of civilians decreased, but Iraqi force death jumped to 233.

The nature of the sectarian fighting in the “war after the war” changed the meaning of casualty counts in monitoring the progression of the conflict. As tragic as the following set of numbers appears, it does not provide of a full picture of the sectarian war. What was equally important was “soft” ethnic cleansing by sectarian groups in order to control political and economic space. This involves intimidation campaigns, threats, kidnappings, propaganda, corruption and blackmail to force other ethnic groups out of an area. An important measurement of this cleansing was the number of internally displaced persons, but the key figure – the amount of popular support that these sectarian groups received – was difficult to measure and not represented by the numbers below.

MNF-I/US/Non-Iraqi Estimates

Figure III.21 summarizes recent Coalition efforts to show the cycles in Iraqi military and official casualties, and the numbers show a cyclical tendency towards steady escalation. These figures would be far higher if wounded, and men attempting to join the forces at recruiting stations were included. Nevertheless, these data do provide some useful insights.

According to the Pentagon's October 2005 "Measuring Stability and Security In Iraq" report to Congress, "Approximately 80 percent of all attacks are directed against Coalition Forces, but 80% of all casualties are suffered by Iraqis."

The Pentagon data showed the average number of daily attacks against Iraqis had more than doubled since early 2004, from around 25 attacks per day to an average of 64 per day in the summer and fall of 2005. In early 2006, military officials said that an average of 70 Iraqi officers were killed each month. A clear trend was visible in the data, with the number of daily attacks against Iraqis climbing from 40 in the pre-election period (June-November 2004) to more than fifty during the election (December 2004-February 2005), and then increasingly dramatically to more than 60 in the run-up to the October 2005 referendum.

The Pentagon numbers did not, however, distinguish between Iraqi security forces and civilian deaths. Pentagon spokesman Lieutenant Command Greg Hicks played down the significance of the report, telling reporters: "It's kind of a snapshot...The Defense Department doesn't maintain a comprehensive or authoritative count of Iraqi casualties."
A follow-on analysis of the Pentagon data carried out by several news organizations however showed 26,000 Iraqis had been killed or injured since the end of the war. Further analysis of the Pentagon data showed that for every US soldier killed in Iraq, at least 13 Iraqi civilians were also killed.

According to figures obtained by the Associated Press, 1,006 Iraqis were reported killed in political or sectarian violence in June 2006, 885 of which were civilians. The overall number was down from the 1,053 deaths recorded in May. But despite the decrease in deaths, the number of Iraqis wounded went up to 1,769 in June up from 1,426 in May. The AP tallies showed 5,062 Iraqis killed and 6,898 wounded in the first six months of 2006.\(^9\)

Iraqi security forces deaths decreased in September to 150 – the lowest number since June.\(^9\) The decline may have been due to both Operation Together Forward and moving US and Iraqi forces to Baghdad at the cost of the coverage of other areas, which led insurgents to target US troops instead of Iraqis. Since the formation of ISF in 2004, the US military reported on October 6, 2006 that about 4,000 policemen had been killed and 8,000 wounded.\(^9\) ISF deaths rose significantly during the month of Ramadan, according to the US military officials. General George Casey announced that the Iraqi Army alone lost 300 men during the Muslim holy month.\(^9\)

In mid-October US military officials announced that in recent weeks there had been significant spikes in violence. The military said that the numbers of killings and bombing had been initially reduced in August. But in October, “The levels of violence over the last few weeks are as high as they have ever been,” said General George Casey.\(^9\) US military statistics showed that death squads killed 1,450 people in September, up from 450 in February. And in the first ten days of October, death squads had already killed 770 Iraqis – an average of 77 a day. In previous months, the highest average was 47 daily deaths due to sectarian killings, according to US military data. The averages did not even include deaths due to car bombing or suicide bombing attacks, only assassinations and reprisal killings.\(^9\)

Another comparison shows the growth of “body dumps” in the capital during the early fall. During the week that ended on October 14, 176 Iraqis were found on the streets of Baghdad and the following week 143 were recovered. When Operation Together Forward II commenced the first week of August, 52 bodies were found.\(^9\) And according to a count kept by the Associated Press, 1,170 Iraqi civilians died in October – the highest number since AP began keeping track.\(^9\)

General Casey remained optimistic that Operation Together Forward would eventually reduce violence in the capital. He said that spikes in violence were expected, but that the numbers would soon fall again.\(^9\)

The Defense Intelligence Agency said that daily attacks on Iraqi civilians rose from 10 in January to about 40 in October.\(^9\) According to the Associated Press count, 1,923 Iraqi civilians were killed in November.

MNF-Iraq spokesman Maj. Gen. William B. Caldwell IV said that attacks decreased against Iraqi civilian and security forces after the end of Ramadan to the lowest levels since May 2006. Security force casualties decreased 21% in the four weeks following the holy month and in Baghdad casualties related to sectarian violence and executions fell 22%.\(^9\) General Abizaid, commander of USCENTCOM, said that 80% of sectarian killings took place within 35 miles of
Baghdad. The August-November Department of Defense Stability and Security report noted that civilian casualties increased 2% during the reporting period.

The Iraq Study Group Report brought to the surface contradictions in the way US agencies recorded threats and violence in Iraq. The report said that one day in July there were 93 attacks reported, but in reality there were 1,100. The issue was that attacks against Iraqis were not necessarily added to the count – only attacks against coalition forces were. The failure to accurately account for attacks against Iraqi civilians and security forces was misleading at best.

Although numbers of killed reported by US/MNF-I/non-Iraqi sources varied somewhat, the vast majority most likely underrepresented the actual number. As the violence spread out from Baghdad, the number of Iraqi civilians killed in rural towns and smaller urban areas increased, but often went unreported.

The Associated Press counted 13,738 violent deaths of Iraqi civilians, soldiers, and policemen in all of 2006. This number is roughly 2,500 below the count reported by the Iraqi Ministry of Interior.

**Iraqi Government Estimates**

The Iraqi government has been reluctant to release similar casualty data, perhaps because it fears this could show its weaknesses and discourage recruiting. The Ministry of Defense did report, however, that 85 Iraqi soldiers were killed in May 2005, compared with 40 in April, an increase of 75%. At least 79 soldiers were wounded in May, compared with 63 in April.

The Ministry of Interior reported that 151 Iraqi police were killed in May 2005, compared with 86 in April, an increase of 75%. At least 325 policemen were wounded in May, compared with 131 in April. The Ministry of Health reported that 434 civilians were killed in May, compared with 299 in April, and that 775 civilians were wounded, versus 598 the previous month.

The Ministry of the Interior released new figures on Iraqi civilian and security force casualties in June 2005. The ministry found that Iraqi civilians and police officers died at a rate of about 800 a month from August 2004 until May 2005. Reportedly, insurgents killed 8,175 Iraqis during that time. Iraqi Interior Minister Bayan Jabr stated that same month that insurgents had killed approximately 12,000 Iraqis since the Coalition invasion, an average of 500 a month as reported by the New York Times.

An independent count of Iraqi military and police casualties showed that some 1,300 had been killed between the fall of Saddam Hussein in April 2003 and the end of 2004, but that an increase in insurgent activity and a new focus on Iraq forces killed 109 in January 2005, 103 in February, 200 in March, 200 in April and 110 in the first week of May. This was a total of roughly 1,200 killed in the first six months of 2005, raising the total to over 2,400 killed – scarcely a decline in insurgent activity. In contrast, the MNF-I reported that "more than 2,000" Iraqi security forces personnel had been killed by the end of July 2005.

The Iraqi Ministry of Health has periodically reported casualty figures since mid-2003. In late 2003, the ministry announced that 1,764 Iraqis had been killed during the summer months. Data for the period between April 2004 and October 2004 show 3,853 civilians were killed and 15,517 were injured.
In January of 2005, the Ministry provided the BBC with the following statistics for the six-month period from July 2004 to January 2005:

- 3,724 people in Iraq were killed and 12,657 injured in conflict related violence
- 2,041 of these deaths were the result of military action, in which 8,542 people were injured
- 1,233 deaths were the result of "terrorist" incidents

These figures, based on records from Iraqi public hospitals, do not distinguish between the deaths of civilians or Iraqi security forces, and may include insurgent casualties as well. UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw described the Iraqi method of calculating casualties in October 2004:

> Every hospital reports daily the number of civilians (which may include insurgents) who have been killed or injured in terrorist incidents or as a result of military action. All casualties are likely to be taken to hospital in these circumstances except for some insurgents (who may fear arrest) and those with minor injuries.

The Iraqi Health Ministry has provided a breakdown of Iraqi deaths from early November 2004 until early April 2005, although this count relies on uncertain data from morgues and hospitals.

The Health Ministry noted that during this period:

- 32% of the 3,853 deaths accounted for by the ministry occurred in Baghdad.
- Al Anbar witnessed the second highest number of deaths.
- Najaf had the third highest number of deaths.
- Children represented 211 out of the 3,853 deaths.
- The highest death rates per capita were Al Anbar, followed by Najaf and Diyala.
- The ministry recorded 15,517 wounded, of which men made up 91%.

Figures were not available for the months prior to August 2004 and no breakdowns of the data were made available. This gap in the data may be partly explained by the fact that until summer 2004, casualty information was gathered by the Ministry of Health and relied on information provided by hospitals and morgues.

Iraqi government figures released by the defense, interior and health ministries in late October 2005 reported more than 4,000 Iraqi deaths (of whom at least 3,000 were civilian) to date for the year 2005. The breakdown was as follows: 3,314 civilian, 1,053 police, and, 413 soldiers. Also killed were 1,389 suspected insurgents.

Iraqi officials reported 702 Iraqi deaths for the month of September 2005 alone. The figure fell by 42 percent to 407 the following month. October's figure included 83 police and at least 25 soldiers. Although it was the fourth deadliest month for US forces, the death toll for Iraqi civilians and security forces was relatively low in October.

In June 2006, the Iraqi government reported that more Baghdad residents were killed in shootings and other low-level attacks in May than in any previous month. Excluding bombings, 1,398 bodies were brought to the Baghdad morgue, 307 more than in April, according to the Ministry of Health and Statistics. The following month, on July 3, the Associated Press
reported that the Defense, Interior, and Health Ministries tallied the total number of deaths in June at 1,006.939

While hard, accurate numbers on Iraqi casualties are elusive, general trends may be inferred to provide a rough gauge of the level of relative violence. Over the past few months, at least since the beginning of 2006, official sources tend to point to a general increase in the number of civilian casualties.

According to a report released by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), “a total of 5,818 civilians were reportedly killed and at least 5,762 wounded during May and June.”940 The report, assessing conditions in Iraq over May and June, noted “insurgent, militia, and terrorist attacks continued unabated in many parts of Iraq, especially in Baghdad.” It described humanitarian conditions across Iraq as follows:941

Killings, kidnappings and torture remain widespread. Fear resulting from these and other crimes continued to increase internal displacement and outflows of Iraqis to neighboring countries. The negative effect of violence on professional categories, targeted by sectarian an criminal violence or displaced as a result, coupled with inadequate provision of basic services, also affected the level of education and health care received by the population. Women, children and vulnerable groups, such as minorities, internally displaced and disabled persons continue to be directly affected by the violence and the ongoing impunity for human rights violations. Organized crime and corruption have persistently added to overall insecurity.

The United Nations based its data relating to civilian casualties on tallies provided by the Ministry of Health, which tracked violent deaths recorded at hospitals around Iraq, and Baghdad’s central morgue, where unidentified bodies were delivered. The report documented a general “upward trend” in civilian deaths since the summer of 2005. During the first six months of 2006, the death toll increased more than 77 percent form 1,778 in January to 3,149 in June.

According to the UN report:942

…figures from the Ministry of Health, which included counts from hospitals in all Governorates943 indicate that 1, 294 civilians died as a result of violence in May 2006 (among them 58 women and 17 children) and 2,687 were wounded (among them 178 women and 41 children). In June 2006 1,554 civilians died violently (among them 66 women and 30 children) and 3,075 were wounded (176 women and 58 children). The overwhelming majority of casualties were reported in Baghdad. In addition, the Medico-Legal Institute in Baghdad (MLI) separately reported receiving 1,375 unidentified bodies in May and 1,595 in June 2006. The total figure of civilians killed in Iraq, adding the figures provided by the Ministry of Health and the MLI, reaches 2,669 civilians in May and 3,149 in June 2006. According to the Ministry of Health, from January to June 2006, there were 6,826 civilians killed and 13,256 wounded.944 Including the figures of the MLI in Baghdad for the period, the total civilians killed in Iraq from January-June 2006 was 14,338.945

The numbers presented in the report were somewhat questionable, but were still considered “the most precise measurement of civilian deaths provided by any government organization since the invasion and represented a substantial increase over the figures in daily news media reports.”946 Indicating that an average of more than 100 civilians per day were killed in Iraq in June, at the time of its reporting, the death tally was considered the highest official tally of violent deaths since the fall of Baghdad.947

While the numbers compiled by the United Nations represented an improvement over past official reporting, they were still prone to a variety of inaccuracies, and likely represented a significant undercount:
• First, the tallies were based entirely on numbers released by the Ministry of Health and the Baghdad central morgue—both of which have not traditionally compiled war casualty data in any sort of systemic or accountable manner, and were prone to data meddling.  

• Second, the data could only cover deaths that were formally reported, thus overlooking scores of civilians who have been killed clandestinely, bodies that have not been discovered, or those kidnapped and left unaccounted.

• Third, the numbers likely focused—as most counts do—on deaths that occurred in Baghdad, since reporting of civilian casualties in other parts of the country were much less comprehensive.

Therefore, at best, this set of official figures only captured a physical count of the bodies that were turned in, omitting the many dead that never made it to a morgue or hospital.

David Lake, a member of the Center for Study of Civil War, an international group of scholars who study the causes and effects of internal strife, said, “The way to think about the violence is that it’s not just the insurgent attacks that matter”—an observation that many official polls tend to overlook as they often fail to mention or account for the number of war-related injuries, incidents of crime, kidnapping, torture, extortion, and other acts of violence. Consequently, official casualty tallies tend to under-report the scope and intensity of the violence in Iraq, and often over-emphasize attacks that occur in places that are widely covered, such as Baghdad.

On June 25, the Ministry of Health stated that the Iraqi death toll since 2003 exceeded 50,000—a toll that was around 20,000 more than estimates announced by the Bush administration. The Baghdad morgue received 30,204 bodies from 2003 through mid-2006, and the Ministry of Health documented 18,933 deaths resulting from “military clashes” and “terrorist attacks” between April 5, 2004 and June 1, 2006.

The combined death toll reached 49,137, and the Ministry of Health noted that the figure was probably significantly too low. The death toll did not include deaths outside of Baghdad in the first year of the invasion.

The morgue records showed that most of the casualties were civilians, as opposed to combatants, or security forces. According to morgue officials, “the vast majority of bodies processed had been shot execution-style. Many showed signs of torture—drill holes, burns, missing eyes and limbs. Others had been strangled, beheaded, stabbed or beaten to death.”

The deaths recorded by the Ministry of Health indicated that about 75 percent of those who died violently died in “terrorist acts,” typically bombings. The other 25 percent of the deaths were classified as “military clashes,” or incidents in which “innocent bystanders” were shot by Iraqi or American troops, in crossfire, or accidentally at checkpoints.

Notably, the classifications by the Ministry of Health did not include deaths caused by crime-related activities, which likely contributed to a significant number of those killed. This oversight was probably a reflection of vague documentation, or more likely was an indication that the distinction between homicide and sectarian violence had become increasingly blurred.

The May–June 2006 UNAMI update reported a wide-range of violence that led to civilian casualties, including: bombings and drive-by shootings, from indiscriminate attacks, in neighborhood markets or petrol stations, or following armed clashes with the police and the security forces. Civilians were also targeted or became unintended victims of insurgent or military actions. Terrorist acts against civilians have been aimed at fomenting sectarian violence or allegedly motivated by revenge and have targeted members of the Arab...
Shi’a and Sunni communities, including their cultural symbols, as well as markets in Shi’a neighborhoods. Collusion between criminal gangs, militias and sectarian “hit groups,” alleged death squads, vigilante groups and religious extremists, adds further complexity to the situation. Certain neighborhoods in Baghdad often witness fighting among armed groups, police, and Special Forces. Execution-style killings continue to take place in the streets of Baghdad and other locations, most notably in Babil, Basra, Falluja, Karbala, Kirkuk, Mosul and Ramadi.

Civilian casualties reached heightened levels in July—described by newspaper headlines as the “deadliest” for Iraqi civilians. According to figures released by the Iraqi Health Ministry and the Baghdad morgue, an average of more than 110 Iraqis were killed each day in July, and the total number of civilian deaths was 3,438 that month, representing a 9 percent increase since June. When the July tally was added to official figures reported in earlier months (collected by the United Nations), the total indicated that at least 17,776 Iraqi civilians died violently since the beginning of 2006, an average of 2,539 civilians per month.956

The Baghdad morgue reported receiving 1,855 bodies in July.957 According to the facility’s assistant manager, Abdul Razzaq al-Obeidi, roughly 90 percent had died violently,958 the majority of which had gunshot wounds in their heads—often an indication of death squad assassinations.959

While the Iraqi Health Ministry did not release figures on the number of civilians wounded by attacks in Baghdad in July, the Ministry reported that at least 3,597 Iraqis were wounded that month outside the city, representing a 25 percent increase since June.960 Gen. George Casey attributed 60 percent of the killings to Shi’ite death squads, and the rest to attacks by al-Qai’da and related groups.961

In August, the Baghdad morgue received 1,535 bodies, representing a 17 percent decrease from July to levels near those recorded in June.962 The increase was expected to be greater, but a lull in violence in early August, was followed by a sharp upsurge later in the month.

According to the July-August 2006 UNAMI Human Rights Report, the number of Iraqi civilians killed in July and August reached 6,599.963 Relying on data provided by the Ministry of Health and the Medico-Legal Institute in Baghdad, the UN update states:964

The number of civilians violently killed in the country was an unprecedented 3,590 in July (including 183 women and 23 children) and 3,009 in August (including 194 women and 24 children).965 The number of wounded reached 3,793 in July (including 234 women and 72 children). The Medico-Legal Institute in Baghdad reported that that the number of bodies brought to the Institute was a record 1,855 in July and 1,536 in August 2006; the overwhelming majority of the casualties died of gunshot wounds (1,417 in July and 1,091 in August).

The Iraqi Health Ministry reported that 2,667 Iraqi civilians were killed violently in September – an increase of 400 from the August statistics. The figure was comprised of the numbers given by the Baghdad morgue and numbers reported from hospitals. In September, the morgue reported 1,471 bodies of people who died from violence and hospitals reported 1,196 victims.966 Morgue officials said that at least 90% of the killings were carried out in execution style – with shots to the head and body after the victim had been tortured.967

Statistics issued by the Interior Ministry for Iraqis killed in “political violence” put civilian deaths in October at 1,289, nearly 42 a day and up 18 percent from the 1,089 seen in September.968 The MOI explained that the number was composed of deaths resulting from “political, sectarian, or ethnic killings, as opposed to criminal murder.” MOI also said 139 Iraqi
soldiers and police were killed in October – which is far fewer than the 300 announced by US Gen. George Casey. 969

Around 1,600 bodies were taken to Baghdad's morgue in October, an official said – 10% more than in September. 970

The September 1 – October 31, 2006 UN Aid Mission to Iraq Human Rights (UNAMI) report published the following numbers from the Iraqi Ministry of Health: 971

- 3,345 civilians were killed violently across Iraq in September and the number of wounded was 3,481.
- 3,709 civilians were killed violently across Iraq in October and the number of wounded was 3,944.
- In Baghdad the total number of civilians killed violently was 2,262 in September and 2,722 in October.
- The number of unidentified bodies in Baghdad was 1,471 in September and 1,782 in October.

Data from Interior Ministry officials showed a 44% increase in civilian casualties in November compared with October to 1,850 deaths. 972

The Interior Ministry announced on December 25 that 12,000 Iraqi policemen – equating to 9 per day - had been killed since the US-led invasion. 973 On January 1, 2007 the MOI also announced that 16,273 Iraqi civilians, soldiers, and policemen died violent deaths in 2006. The number of civilians killed was by far the largest at 14, 298. 974

December was the deadliest month for Iraqi civilians in 2006, according to statistics released by the Iraqi Health, Interior, and Defense Ministries. The death toll was 1,927 in December, compared with 1,846 in November and 1,315 in October. A total of 12,320 civilians died during 2006, according to the Health Minister – about 2,000 less than the MOI reported. This statistic, however, did not include kidnap victims whose fate remained unknown and those wounded who later died. 975

The Health Ministry also said that half of the civilians were killed in the last four months of 2006, which clearly corresponded with the increased level of violence. 976 A Washington Post article cited the Health Ministry as saying that 17,000 Iraqi civilians police officers died violently in the latter half of 2006 – a significantly larger number than other data released. A Health Ministry official told the Post that the number of Iraqi killed in the first six months, 5,640, tripled in the second half of the year. The total number of civilians and security forces killed would be 22,950. 977

The Post acknowledged the discrepancies in the 2006 data and said that the numbers could not be reconciled. Again, what is important is not the actual numbers, but that all sources show that violence increased in the second half of 2006 and that Iraqi civilians were increasingly the victims of sectarian violence.

According to date from the Iraqi Ministry of Health and the Medico Legal Institute of Baghdad, the UN reported that 3,462 civilians died violently in November and 2,914 in December. The number of wounded civilians was 3,755 in November and 3,120 in December. In Baghdad alone the number killed violently was 2,230 in November and 2, 501 in December. The UN reported that the total number killed violently in 2006 was 34,452, which the Iraqi government rapidly disavowed. The yearly average was 94 civilians killed every day. Further, 36,685 civilians were wounded in 2006.
Figure III.26: Average Daily Iraqi Military and Official Casualties by Month: January 2004-September 2005

NGO Estimates: Iraqi Body Count and Iraq Coalition Casualties

The Iraq Body Count (http://iraqbodycount.net/database) and Iraq Coalition Casualties (http://icasualties.org/oif/) seem to provide among the best data, or "guesstimates," among non-governmental organizations on Iraqi casualties. However, these counts are still extremely uncertain. Iraq Body Count released a study of Iraqi casualties since the Coalition invasion in conjunction with the Oxford Research Group in mid-2005. The study concluded that approximately 25,000 Iraqi civilians were killed in 2003 and 2004 with about a third having been killed by Coalition troops.

Although men over 18 accounted for the bulk of civilian deaths, the study found that women and children accounted for almost 20% of all deaths. Almost 80% of civilian deaths occurred in 12 cities. Baghdad accounted for almost half of the civilian deaths during this period. Figure III.22 shows the breakdown, although it may undercount deaths in towns and cities in Western Iraq, and does not cover the time period for several important Coalition campaigns from March 2005 onwards. Figure III.23 does include this time period however, and shows total Iraqi civilian and military casualties through May 2006.

The study relied on casualty reports made available on 152 selected websites and did not try to verify the sites' sources. Some of the sites are relatively unknown and are of uncertain reliability. It also is not clear how strenuously the IBC has tried to sift military casualties from civilian casualties. Impinging the credibility of the IBC’s figures further is the fact that it is an avowed antiwar group.

In late 2005, Iraq Coalition Casualties estimated that the number of Iraqis killed was 26,982-30,380. This figure had risen to a range of 33,638-37,764 by March 2006, and 38,475-42,889 by mid June. Iraq Coalition Casualties also began to provide the monthly breakouts of both Iraqi military and Iraqi civilian casualties shown in Figure III.19. Although such figures are uncertain, the much higher estimates made by some other organizations however, use methodologies and databases that are so weak that they simply lack credibility.

Iraq Body Count estimated that a total of 4,079 Iraqi soldiers and police had been killed by early February 6, 2006. A total of 1,300 were estimated to have been killed before 2005. The number of dead from 2005 to February 2006 was estimated at 2,779. A different estimate, by Iraqi Coalition Casualty Count, gave very different numbers and indicates the uncertainties involved. It estimated that 2,982 Iraqi police and military were killed between April 28, 2005 and June 16, 2006, and that 684 had been killed since the bombing of the Al Askari mosque on February 22, 2006. Its estimates showed variations of from lows of 109 per month to highs of 304. In both cases, however, it was unclear that the many Iraqis who were killed trying to enlist or that all recruits and police were counted. No meaningful data were issued on wounded.

By the end of October 2006, Iraq Body Count estimated that between 44,978 and 49,938 Iraqis had been killed since the US-led invasion in 2003.

Iraq Coalition Casualties reported 3,539 Iraqi civilian deaths in September, 1,315 in October, and 1,740 in November. ICC also reported 150 security force casualties in September, 244 in October, and 123 in November. Figure 7 shows that according to ICC, September took the
heaviest toll on civilians in 2005 and 2006. This figure is higher than the 2,667 deaths reported by the Iraqi Health Ministry, but both numbers are well above average.

By the late-January 2007, Iraq Body Count estimated that between 54,432 and 60,098 Iraqis civilians had been killed since the US-led invasion in 2003.

Iraq Coalition Casualties reported 1,629 civilian deaths in December 2006, less than the 1,741 of November and well below the 3,389 reported in September. ICC thus differed with the Iraqi government statistics over which month in 2006 was the deadliest for Iraqi civilians. ICC reported 123 security force deaths in December, the same as in November.
Figure III.27: Iraqi Fatalities by City: March 2003-February 2005

Source: Adapted from material provided by Iraq Body Count Data, available at: www.iraqbodycount.org
Figure III.28: Total Iraqi Military and Civilian Casualties by Month: January 2005-November 2006

Figure III.29: Civilian Casualties Reported by Baghdad Central Morgue and Iraqi Ministry of Health: January –August 2006


*note: After August 2006 the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq Human Rights Report did not separate out deaths reported by the Ministry of Health and deaths reported by the Baghdad Morgue. In November and December 2006 the Report stated that figures were compiled from the Iraqi Ministry of Health and the Medico-Legal Institute of Baghdad. In the month of December, figures from some Governorates were not yet included in the total provided.
Figure III.30: Civilian Casualties Reported by Baghdad Central Morgue: Comparison of 2005 and 2006

**Questionable Reporting**

US officials initially claimed a drastic drop in the death toll in August, primarily attributing the decline to gains from the second phase of Operation Forward Together. In late August, Gen. Caldwell reported that the number of deaths in Baghdad dropped 46 percent from July to August, and that the number of insurgent attacks in the province declined to an average of 23 per day. However, estimates were continuously revised upward after officials said that people killed by bombs, mortars, rockets or other mass attacks were not included in the original counts. According the UN data, the number of deaths in Baghdad only declined slightly from 2,884 in July to 2,222 in August. The discrepancies raised serious questions about reporting accuracies, and possible efforts to cloud the severity of violence in Iraq.

Even official data from updated reports were highly questionable and were widely perceived to be undercounts. The July-August UNAMI human rights document noted that the Health Ministry did not report any civilian deaths during July in the province of Anbar—an extremely unstable area that includes hot spots like Ramadi and Fullujah. This data also sharply contradicted general reporting that cited sharp and continuous violence in the province. In early September, for example, the chief of intelligence for the Marine Corps in Iraq, Col. Pete Devlin, filed a classified report that essentially concluded that the security situation in Anbar was hopeless, and that US efforts to stabilize the country were impeded by the lack of functioning government institutions, creating a void that was filled by al-Qa’ida in Iraq.

At the end of September Reuters reported that according to the Iraqi Health Ministry, deaths of Iraqi civilians rose in September to 1,089. In August, the Health Ministry had reported a figure almost half that number, but had not included deaths by bombs, mortars, rockets or other mass attacks. The figure was still well below the monthly average of 3,000 that the UNAMI reported in their July-August human rights update.

In early October The Lancet published a report stating that 654,965 additional Iraqis had died since the US led invasion in 2003. The research – conducted by researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the School of Medicine at Al Mustansiriya University in Baghdad – was based on a pre-invasion mortality rate and a post-invasion mortality rate. The former figure was based on figures publicized during Saddam Hussein’s regime, and the latter figure was found by interviewing 1849 households across the country from May 20 to July 10, 2006.

Researchers questioned household members about the number of deaths and the cause of death of Iraqis living in their home. In about 92% of the cases, the researchers were shown death certificates. The survey found that mortality rates had risen from 2.6 per 1000 people per year in 2003 to 14.2 per 1000 people in 2006. Using the increased mortality rate, the researchers estimated that an average of 654,965 Iraqis died due to the invasion, about 2.5% of the population in the study areas. Of those deaths, 601,027 were believed to be due to violence. These numbers were vastly greater than other US or Iraqi death toll counts. This study must be put into context. The nearly 655,000 extra deaths was an average of the margin of error, which ranged from 392,979 to 942,636. Further, the study failed to take into account the invalidity of
their pre-invasion baseline mortality rate. The study assumed that the numbers provided during Saddam Hussein’s propaganda regime were accurate – a lofty assumption.

Moreover, the study itself remarked on the difficulties of conducting such a survey under extremely violent conditions. The report also cites that around half of the household members interviewed did not know the exact cause of death. And the 92% of households that had death certificates – for 550,000 people – did not equate with the total number of deaths reported by the Baghdad Morgue and Ministry of Health – 50,000 - which would supply information for death certificates.987

Finally, the study’s findings did not make sense compared to other estimates and compared to the situation on the ground. If 600,000 Iraqis died violent deaths since 2003, at least that many would have been wounded, making the final tally beyond the realm of possibility. An analysis of the *Lancet* study states that the Iraqi Ministry of Health estimates about 2.9 wounded for every person killed. Applying that ratio to the 600,000 killed in violent deaths, the wounded would number 1,800,000. This estimate equates to 1 in every 15 Iraqis, or about 7% of the adult male population.988 This figure is too large to go unrecorded by hospitals or the morgue. The death toll given by the Iraq Body Count of an average of 45,000 Iraqis killed up to October 2006 was far more reasonable.

The faulty reporting by US sources underscored an important lesson of war—the need for providing accurate and credible data. If the United States is to successfully curb violence in Iraq, it will have to commit to providing a clear and accurate picture of conditions in Iraq, and building trust among its own citizens and the Iraqi public. It will also need to realistically confront a growing body of data that pointed to a rise in civilians casualties, attacks on US and Iraqi forces, and roadside bombs.
VI. Evolving Tactics

The insurgency has steadily improved its tactics and approaches to warfare. These changes can be divided into two broad groups. The first were changes in the way the insurgents pursued their goal of blocking the Iraqi political process and creating the kind of political conditions that might drive the Coalition out of Iraq. The second were changes in the way the insurgency dealt with the more military aspects of asymmetric warfare. In both cases, insurgent attacks tended to follow a seasonal pattern in which attacks increased during the spring and summer months and decreased in the fall and winter.989

It should be noted, however, that such an analysis does not cover the full range of insurgent actions in threatening Iraqis, or attack and killing them. It may understand the ability to use criminal elements and part time volunteers, and other actions that create a permeating level of violence and intimidation in insurgent dominated areas. It is difficult to analyze such patterns or put them in scale and perspective. The analysis also does not cover actions by Iraq's militias or the use of Iraqi forces in death squads and other sectarian and ethnic violence discussed later.

Political, Psychological, and Information Warfare

The goals that shaped the strategy and tactics used by the various insurgent groups evolved steadily after the summer and fall of 2003. The most serious shift in goals was broadening the focus of the attacks to include the new Iraqi government, the Iraqi forces, and the supporters of the new government. As has been discussed earlier, the insurgents came to make more and more use of political, psychological, and information warfare to try to drive the Coalition out of Iraq, disrupt the new political process, and encourage sectarian and ethnic violence.

These trends accelerated as Islamist extremist groups came to play a larger role in the insurgency and use more extreme tactics. Almost from the beginning, Iraqi insurgents, terrorists, and extremists also exploited the fact that the media tends to focus on dramatic incidents with high casualties, gives them high publicity, and spends little time analyzing the patterns in the insurgency.

Beginning in early 2006, as the violence shifted toward low-level civil conflict in general, the identities of the attackers were often difficult to discern. While roadside bombings and suicide attacks still took place, the increase in abduction and assassinations of civilian Iraqis, many taken in broad daylight in front of their house or business, seemed to be the dominant trends. It is likely that a mix of Sunni insurgents, Islamist extremists, Shi’ite militias and organized criminal gangs played roles in this cycle of sectarian conflict characterized by attacks and reprisals.

The changes in insurgent goals also had a major impact on insurgent tactics. While various insurgent elements did have different priorities and evolved different approaches to warfare, they came to exploit the following methods and tactics relating to political, psychological, and information warfare:

- **Attack the structures of governance and security by ideological, political, and violent means:** Use ideological and political means to attack the legitimacy of the government and nation building process. Intimidate and subvert the military and security forces. Intimidate and attack government officials and institutions at the national, regional, and local levels. Strike at infrastructure, utilities, and services in ways
that appear to show the government cannot provide essential economic services or personal security. A July 2005 letter to Zarqawi from Ayman al-Zawahiri admonished the Al Qa'ida in Iraq leader for focusing too much on military attacks and not enough on political actions. In the letter, Zawahiri said freeing the country from Americans “does not depend on force alone” and urged Zarqawi to “direct the political action equally with the military action.”

- **Create alliances of convenience and informal networks with other groups to attack the US, various elements of the Iraqi Interim Government and elected government, and efforts at nation building:** The informal common fronts operate on the principal that the “enemy of my enemy” is my temporary friend. At the same time, movements “franchise” to create individual cells and independent units, creating diverse mixes of enemies that are difficult to attack.

- **Attack Iraqi elites and ethnic and sectarian fault lines; use them to prevent nation building and governance by provoking civil war. Focus attacks on religious leaders, gatherings and mosques:** As the US and Coalition phased down its role, and a sovereign Iraqi government increased its influence and power, insurgents increasingly shifted their focus of their attacks to Iraqi government targets, as well as Iraqi military, police, and security forces. At the same time, they stepped up attacks designed to prevent Sunnis from participating in the new government, and to cause growing tension and conflict between Sunni and Shi’ite, and Arab and Kurd.

There are no clear lines of division between insurgents, but the Iraqi Sunni insurgents focused heavily on attacking the emerging Iraqi process of governance, while Islamist extremist movements used suicide bombing attacks and other bombings to cause large casualties among the Shi’ite and Kurdish populations – sometimes linking them to religious festivals or holidays and sometimes to attacks on Iraqi forces or their recruiting efforts. They also focused their attacks to strike at leading Shi’ite and Kurdish political officials, commanders, and clergy.

Targeting other groups like Shi’ites and Kurds, using car bombings for mass killings, and hitting shrines and festivals forces the dispersal of security forces, makes the areas involved seem insecure, undermines efforts at governance, and offers the possibility of using civil war as a way to defeat the Coalition and Iraqi Interim Government’s efforts at nation building.

For example, a step up in Sunni attacks on Shi’ite targets after the January 30, 2005 election led some Shi’ites to talk about “Sunni ethnic cleansing.” This effect was compounded by bloody suicide bombings, many of which had some form of government target, but killed large numbers of Shi’ite civilians. These attacks included the discovery of 58 corpses dumped in the Tigris, and 19 largely Shi’ite National Guardsmen bodies in a soccer stadium in Haditha. They also included a bombing in Hilla on March 1, 2005 that killed 136 – mostly Shi’ite police and army recruits.

Similar attacks were carried against the Kurds. While the Kurds maintained notably better security over their areas in the north than existed in the rest of the country, two suicide bombers still penetrated a political gathering in Irbil on February 1, 2004, killing at least 105. On March 10, 2005, a suicide bomber killed 53 Kurds in Kirkuk. On May 3, 2005, another suicide bomber – this time openly identified with the Sunni extremist group Ansar al-Sunna blew himself up outside a recruiting station in Irbil, killing 60 and wounding more than 150 others. At the same time, other attacks systematically targeted Kurdish leaders and Kurdish elements in Iraqi forces.

By May 2005, Shi’ites had begun to retaliate, in spite of efforts to avoid this by Shi’ite leaders, contributing further to the problems in establishing a legitimate government and national forces. Sunni and Shi’ite bodies were discovered in unmarked graves and killings struck at both Sunni and Shi’ite clergy.

In addition to assassinations aimed at disrupting the judicial and political process, insurgents have carried out assassinations of religious leaders as part of their larger goal of using sectarian violence to provoke a civil war. At the beginning of July, According to some reports, more than 60 Sunni imams have been killed since the start of the insurgency. There appeared to be an up-turn in the assassination of clerics and imams of both Sunni and Shi’ite sects in late summer and early fall 2005:

- **July 19, 2005:** Gunmen assassinate Sheikh Ahmad al-Juburi, the imam at Al-Taqwa Mosque in Al-Dawrah in southern Baghdad.
August 17, 2005: Gunmen assassinate Ali al-Shimmari, a local imam and a member of the Association of Muslim Scholars, in northeastern Baghdad.

September 1, 2005: Gunmen kill Sheikh Salim Nusayyif Jasim al-Tamimi, the imam of Al-Mustafa Mosque in Baghdad and a member of the Association of Muslim Scholars.

September 15, 2005: A bomb exploded at Rawdat al-Wadi mosque in Mosul killing Sheikh Hikmat Husayn Ali, the imam of the mosque.

September 16, 2005: Insurgents kill Fadhil Amshani, a Shi’ite cleric and follower of Moqtada al Sadr.

October 2, 2005: Gunmen in southeast Baghdad killed Salah Hassan Ayash, a Sunni imam.

October 29, 2005: A suicide bomber struck a small marketplace near a Shi’ite mosque in Huweder, six miles north of Baquba, killing at least 25 and wounding 45.

November 3, 2005: A suicide bomber driving a minibus detonated his explosives outside a Shi’ite mosque in Musayyib, south of Baghdad, killing 20 and wounding 64. The mosque was the site of a previous explosion in July, when a suicide bomber blew up a fuel tanker nearby, killing 54 people.

November 9, 2005: Two car bombs exploded near a Shi’ite mosque in Baghdad, killing six people.

November 14, 2005: Insurgents kill the administrator of Al-Hamid Mosque in the Al-Saydiyah neighborhood of Baghdad.

November 18, 2005: Suicide bombers struck two mosques in the largely Kurdish town of Khanaqin, near the Iranian border. The attacks, against the Sheik Murad and Khanaqin Grand mosques killed at least 80 Shi’ite worshippers and wounding more than 100. A third would-be suicide bomber was arrested shortly after the attacks.

November 19, 2005: A suicide bomber struck a crowd of Shi’ite mourners in the village of Abu Saida, near Baquba, killing at least 36 people.

November 23, 2005: Gunmen wearing Iraqi army uniforms burst into the home of Khadim Sarhid al-Hemaiyem, a Sunni and the head of Iraq’s Batta clan, killing him along with three of his sons and his son-in-law.

November 26, 2005: In Basra, Iraqi police discover the body of Sheikh Nadir Karim, the imam of a Sunni Mosque. Karim had been abducted from his home the previous night.

November 28, 2005: Gunmen kidnapped Shihab Abdul-Hussein, a member of the Badr Organization, in Baghdad.

November 28, 2005: In Dora, a neighborhood in southwest Baghdad, insurgents ambushed a bus carrying British Muslims to Shi’ite shrines, killing two and wounding four.

November 29, 2005: In Fallujah, armed men kill Sheikh Hamza Abbas Issawi, a Sunni cleric who had called for Sunni participation in the upcoming parliamentary elections.

November 30, 2005: Gunmen kill nine Shi’ite laborers near Baquba.

November 30, 2005: Gunmen fired on the home of Salama Khafaji, a prominent Shi’ite politician.

December 4, 2005: In Baghdad, gunmen killed Sheikh Abdul-Salam Abdul-Hussein, a Shi’ite Muslim candidate running in the upcoming general elections and a follower of Moqtada al-Sadr.

Although the upsurge in violence in late November was a deliberate attempt by insurgents to disrupt the upcoming December 15 parliamentary elections, the largely sectarian nature of the violence was also partly due to the US discovery on November 13th of 173 mostly Sunni malnourished and abused detainees in an Interior Ministry prison in Baghdad. The discovery of the secret torture center run by
Shi’ite-led government security forces sparked renewed sectarian violence and led to a number of tit-for-tat murders in late November.

- Clerical figures and religious gatherings continued to be targets through December and into the new year:
  - December 22, 2006: In Balad Ruz, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives outside a mosque, killing 10 Shiites.
  - January 1, 2006: Also in Baghdad, gunmen killed two worshippers and wounded five as they left the Sunni Hodhaifa mosque.
  - January 1, 2006: In Mahmudiyyah, Sunni Arab insurgents shot and killed a Shi’ite cleric, a member of Moqtada Sadr’s movement.
  - January 4, 2006: A suicide bomber detonated his explosives at a funeral in Miqdadiyya, killing 37 Shiite mourners and wounding 45 others.
  - January 6, 2006: In Karbala, a suicide bomber struck outside the Imam Hussein Shrine, killing more than 49 Shiites.
  - January 18, 2006: Sadad al-Batah, a Sunni Arab tribal leader related to Defense Minister Saadoun al-Dulaimi, was killed along with his nephew.
  - January 25, 2006: A prominent Sunni Arab cleric, Karim Jassim Mohammed, 39, was shot dead Wednesday by police at a checkpoint heading into the northern city of Samarra.
  - January 30, 2006: Gunmen killed the wife and two sons of a Sunni Arab cleric north of Baghdad.
  - February 7, 2006: Kamal Nazzal, a prominent Sunni cleric and head of the Fallujah city council, was killed by gunmen in a drive by shooting as he arrived at city hall.
  - February 7, 2006: Iraqi security forces detained at least 26 suspected Sunni Arab insurgents planning to attack Shiite pilgrims during Ashoura commemorations. Kamal Nazzal, a prominent Sunni cleric and head of the Fallujah city council, was killed by gunmen in a drive by shooting as he arrived at city hall.
  - February 8, 2006: Ten roadside bombs were defused near a bridge in Latifiyah, about 20 miles south of Baghdad, that police believed were set to target Shiite visitors heading to Karbala. Police also found the bodies of another four Shiite pilgrims who had been shot repeatedly and dumped on Baghdad’s northern outskirts.
  - February 9, 2006: Adel Khalil Dawoud, a Sunni cleric, was dragged from his home by at least 15 men in the uniform of the Interior Ministry’s Special Forces.
  - February 10, 2006: A bomb exploded in a car parked 10 yards from a Sunni Muslim mosque killing eight worshipers and wounding 22 others in Baghdad’s Dora neighborhood.
  - February 16, 2006: Three tribal sheiks were slained in a drive-by shooting.
  - February 22-28, 2006: The hardline Sunni clerical Association of Muslim Scholars said 10 imams killed and 15 abducted in the aftermath of the Askariya bombing.
  - March 5, 2006: Men wearing military uniforms and driving Interior Ministry cars stormed the al-Nour mosque, a Sunni mosque, in the Jihad neighborhood in west Baghdad, killing three and wounding seven in 25 minute gun battle. The mosque’s imam and his son were among the dead. Two relatives of a top Sunni cleric were slain in a drive-by shooting.
• April 2, 2006: Gunmen assassinated a Sunni Arab sheik, Abdul-Minaam Awad.

• April 3, 2006: Sheik Omar Abdul-Razzaq Qaisi, a prominent Shi’ite cleric, was killed in Kirkuk.

• April 26, 2006: A string of shootings in Baghdad in the evening killed six Iraqis including a Sunni cleric.

• May 12, 2006: Gunmen killed a Sunni imam and his son in Basra as they were leaving a mosque after Friday prayers.

• May 31, 2006: Gunmen killed a Shiite muazzin, as he was leaving his house to go to the Imam Ali Mosque in southwestern Baghdad.

• June 7, 2006: Gunmen shot and killed a Sunni Arab cleric in Kirkuk.

• June 16, 2006: In Basra, gunmen killed Sheikh Yusef Al-Hassan, chairman of the Association of Muslim Scholars for the south region, Dean of the Basra Sunni religious school and Imam as the “Al-Basra Al-Kabeer” mosque.

• After the bombing of the “Golden Shrine” on February 22, 2006, hundreds of Iraqi civilians were killed in only a few days in what was the worst sectarian violence since the fall of Saddam. Attacks were mixed and consisted of large-scale bombings and mortar attacks as well as mystery killings, assassinations and gunfights. Although a precise count of incidents in impossible, some included:

• February 23: The bombing of a Sunni mosque in Baqouba, killed eight Iraqi soldiers and wounded nearly a dozen. At least 47 bodies were found scattered across Iraq late Wednesday and early Thursday, many of them shot execution-style and dumped in Shi’ite-dominated parts of the capital. The individuals, both Shi’ites and Sunnis, were forced from their vehicles on the way to a protest and shot.

• February 24: Three Sunni mosques in southern Baghdad were attacked and mortar rounds landed near the Shi’ite shrine of Salman al-Farisi. Gunmen stormed a house south of Baghdad and shot dead five Shi’ite men. Police found at least 27 bodies in Baghdad and other cities and towns.

• February 25: The bodies of 14 slain police commandos were found near their three burned vehicles near a Sunni mosque in southwestern Baghdad, and 11 other bodies were discovered in various locations across Baghdad. A car bomb killed at least four people in the Shi’ite holy city of Karbala and 13 members of a Shi’ite family were massacred in the town of Baqouba. At least 21 other people died in small-scale shootings and bombing across Baghdad.

• February 26, 2006: Mortars slammed into crowded Baghdad neighborhoods killing 18 people and injuring dozens. At least seven mortar rounds hit in a Shi’ite enclave of Dora a predominantly Sunni Arab district and one of the most dangerous parts of the city police said. Fifteen people were reported killed at 45 injured.

• February 28, 2006: A pair of bomb attacks in the poor, mostly Shi’ite Jadida district left 27 dead and 112 injured. In the first incident, a man wearing an explosives belt targeted a gas station. Five minutes later, the first of at least five car bombs in the capital exploded near a group of laborers. A car bomb struck near a small Shi’ite mosque in the Hurriya district of central Baghdad, killing 25 and injuring 43. Another detonated by remote control near a small market in the mostly Shi’ite Karada district left six dead and 18 injured. In the upscale Sunni Arab district of Zayona, a car bomb targeting an army patrol killed five, while a car bomb targeting a convoy for an advisor to the Defense Ministry, Daham Radhi Assal, injured three. Elsewhere, a car bomb targeting a police patrol on the road between Kirkuk and the capital killed four civilians. Police in the northern, mostly Kurdish city of Kirkuk said they had arrested three suspected Sunni militants planting a roadside bomb. In the Hurriya district, gunmen blew up a Sunni mosque without causing casualties. Attackers also damaged a mosque in Tikrit that houses the remains of Hussein's father. A mortar shell landed near the offices of Baghdad TV, a satellite channel operated by the Iraqi Islamic Party, a Sunni faction. Two employees were injured. Authorities in Baqubah this morning discovered nine bodies, each shot in the head. Two British soldiers were...
killed and another injured when their Land Rover was blown up by a roadside bomb while on patrol in the Iraqi town of Amara.

- Although the days immediately following the shrine bombing were perhaps the most violent, sectarian targets including mosques and religious leaders continued. The primary method of Shi'ite retaliation, chronicled elsewhere, was the use of “death squads” or militias to round up and kill Sunnis. While Shi’ite mosques and religious gatherings were often the targets of suicide bombers, Sunni clerics were frequently the targets of assassins or gunmen:

  - March 2, 2006: US Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch confirmed that since the Golden Mosque bombing there were 33 attacks on mosques, with two destroyed and seven sustaining significant damage.
  - March 4, 2006: Police and Interior Ministry officials said two mosques in the city of Kirkuk, were attacked. Gunmen in a red car fired on a funeral at the Shi'ite Turkman Ahl al-Bayat mosque, killing two people and wounding three. Around the same time, gunmen sprayed a Sunni mosque with bullets, no one was injured.
  - March 5, 2006: Men wearing military uniforms and driving Interior Ministry cars stormed the al-Nour mosque, a Sunni mosque, in the Jihad neighborhood in west Baghdad, killing three and wounding seven in a 25 minute gun battle. The mosque’s imam and his son were among the dead. Two relatives of a top Sunni cleric were slain in a drive-by shooting.
  - March 9, 2006: A bombing that killed three people and injured 10 others near a Sunni mosque in a predominantly Shi'ite neighborhood in southeastern Baghdad.
  - March 11, 2006: A roadside bomb outside another mosque killed three and injured three.
  - March 17, 2006: In Sunni Muslim areas of western Baghdad, gunmen in passing automobiles killed three Shiite Muslim pilgrims and wounded five others. To the south, bombs in a minibus and along the pilgrimage road killed two people and wounded nine.
  - March 18, 2006: Shiites Muslims heading to the holy city of Karbala came under attack, with a roadside bomb killing one and wounding five.
  - March 22, 2006: Gunmen in western Baghdad attacked a truck carrying Shiite Muslim pilgrims returning from a religious ceremony in Karbala, killing one and wounding 10.
  - March 23, 2006: A car bomb struck outside a Shiite Muslim mosque in Shurta, at least six people were killed and more than 20 wounded.
  - March 24, 2006: A bomb outside of Sunni mosque in Khalis, northeast of Baghdad, killed five and wounded 12.
  - March 25, 2006: Gunmen in west Baghdad killed a Sunni mosque preacher.
  - April 1, 2006: Gunmen attacked a minibus carrying Shiites northeast of Baghdad, killing six men and wounding one woman. A Sunni sheik was killed in a drive by shooting in Basra.
  - April 3, 2006: A car bomb detonated near a Shiite mosque in the Shaab neighborhood, killing 10 and wounding 13. Sheik Omar Abdul-Razzaq Qaisi, a prominent Shi'ite cleric, was killed in Kirkuk.
  - April 7, 2006: Three suicide bombers targeted the Baratha mosque in Baghdad, a primary headquarters for SCIRI, killing more than 80 and wounding more than 140. The Iraqi Health Ministry stated that 90 were killed and over 170 wounded. At least two of the bombers were dressed as women to hide the bombs and slipped into the mosque as the worshippers left. The first bomb detonated at the main exit,
and the second inside the mosque as people rushed back in for safety. Ten seconds later, the third bomb exploded.

- April 8, 2006: A car bomb killed six people and wounded 14 near a Shiite shrine south of Baghdad.
- April 9, 2006: A bombing targeted police near a Sunni mosque in the western neighborhood of Ghazaliyah, wounding at least three people.
- April 12, 2006: A car bomb exploded in a crowd leaving evening prayer at a Shi’ite mosque in Huwaider, near Baqubah, killing at least 20 and wounding 40.
- April 14, 2006: In Baquba, two bombs exploded outside two Sunni mosques, killing four and wounding six.
- April 20, 2006: Gunmen attacked a Sunni mosque in the southern Baghdad district of Saidiya, sparking an hour-long clash with mosque guards and residents.
- April 26, 2006: A string of shootings in Baghdad in the evening killed six more Iraqis including a Sunni cleric.
- May 7, 2006: In Karbala, a suicide car bomber targeting the Shi’ite Ahl al-Bait mosque blew himself up early when his car became stuck in traffic. Witnesses said more than 20 were killed, while a local hospital said three were killed, and 23 wounded. US reports indicated that 2 were killed and 18 wounded.
- May 12, 2006: Gunmen killed a Sunni imam and his son in Basra as they were leaving a mosque after Friday prayers.
- May 14, 2006: In the Shi’ite village of Wjihiya near Baqubah, between 20 and 30 insurgents detonated explosives inside of five shrines.
- May 18, 2006: In Baqouba, a bombing destroyed a Sunni shrine. There were no injuries or deaths.
- May 23, 2006: In Baghdad, a bomb exploded in the courtyard of a Shiite mosque killing at least 11 and wounding at least nine.
- May 29, 2006: 12 Iraqis died and 25 were wounded in a car bombing outside the Abu Hanifa mosque in Adhamiya, a Sunni stronghold in north Baghdad.
- June 6, 2006: Inside a Shi’a mosque in Buratha, a suicide bomber killed at least 11 people.
- June 16, 2006: A suicide bomber attacked a Shiite mosque in central Baghdad shortly after the start of Friday prayers, killing 11 and wounding at least 20 others.
- June 23, 2006: A bomb struck the Grand Habib mosque, a Sunni mosque in the Diyala province, northeast of Baghdad, killing ten and wounding 15.
- July 6, 2006: 12 were killed and 41 wounded after a car bomb exploded at the Maithem Al-Tamar shrine in Kufa, near Najaf. The attack appeared to target Shi’a pilgrims from Iran.
- July 8, 2006: A car bomb exploded outside a Shiite mosque in Baghdad, killing three people.
- July 11, 2006: Gunmen killed ten Shi’a in Baghdad as they were taking a coffin on a bus to be buried in Najaf.
- August 19-20, 2006: Twenty were killed and 300 wounded in a two day period when gunmen attacked Shi’a pilgrims visiting the grave of Imam Mousa Al-Kadhum during a Shi’a festivity.
• September 11, 2006: An assault late in the day on a Shiite mosque in Bani Saad, just south of Baquba, involving mortar rounds and assault rifles killed seven. Additional explosives damaged the structure of the mosque.

• September 15, 2006: In Kirkuk, local gunmen killed a tribal sheik and councilman, Abdullah Khalaf Azzawi as he was driving home.

• September 26, 2006: Gunmen attacked that al-Kheyr Sunni mosque in the Kahdra neighborhood of western Baghdad.

• October 13, 2006: Sheikh Radhi al-Assadi, local head of a Shi'ite Muslim religious association was gunned down just west of Basra.

• November 12, 2006: A roadside bomb exploded in front of the home of a man who worked in an office Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, killing two of his children and seriously wounding a third, according to Sistani's office in Najaf.

• November 16, 2006: A Sunni mosque in Kirkuk was blown up.

• November 17, 2006: Gunmen killed Omar al-Falahi, a mosque preacher in Falluja.

• November 18, 2006: Gunmen shot dead a leading member of SCIRI, Ali al-Adhadh, and his wife as they were driving through western Baghdad.

• November 24, 2006: Shi’ite gunmen attacked four mosques in the Hurriya neighborhood of Baghdad, destroying two. Several were killed, but casualty figures varied greatly. Reports said that the militiamen posted pictures of al-Sadr inside the mosques after they attacked. Shi’ite gunmen also fired on a Sunni mosque in Baquba. Sunni insurgents responded by destroying the minaret of a Shi’ite mosque in Baquba. Others reports said that mortars landed on a mosque in the Ghazaliya neighborhood in Baghdad run by the Association of Muslim Scholars. A roadside bomb damaged a Sunni mosque in Kirkuk.

• December 4, 2006: Gunmen kidnapped an Imam of a Sunni mosque in the town of Yathrib, near Balad.

• December 5, 2006: Gunmen ambushed a bus carrying employees for the Shi'ite Endowment, a religious body that oversees Shi'ite mosques, in northern Baghdad, killing 14 people and wounding four, the organization said. An Interior Ministry source said 15 were killed and seven wounded in the attack in Qahira district.

• December 15, 2006: Gunmen killed Muhsin al-Kanani, a Shi’ite sheikh, and two of his guards while they were driving in a car in Basra.

• December 16, 2006: Gunmen assassinated tribal sheikh Sattar al-Khadran, the leader of the Bayati tribe in Zuhra village, along with a companion just north of Baquba, police said.

• December 17, 2006: Gunmen killed Alaa Muhsin, a Sunni sheikh from the Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party, and Sheikh Ismail al- Khanfashi, deputy head of an Iraqi NGO.

• January 19, 2007: The preacher of a Sunni mosque in a mainly Shi’ite district of Kirkuk was shot dead in his home.

• **Link asymmetric warfare to crime and looting; exploit poverty and economic desperation:** Use criminals to support attacks on infrastructure and nation building activity, raise funds, and undermine security. Exploit unemployment to strengthen dedicated insurgent and terrorist cells. Blur the lines between threat forces, criminal elements, and part-time forces.

• **Attack petroleum and oil facilities, electric power, water, and other critical infrastructure:** Attacks on petroleum, power and water facilities have been used to both offset the impact of US aid and direct Iraqi
anger against the government. Al Qa’ida and Ba’athist groups have found oil facilities and pipelines to be particularly attractive targets.

Insurgents carried out more than 300 attacks on Iraqi oil facilities between March 2003 and January 2006. An estimate by Robert Mullen indicates that there were close to 500 and perhaps as many as 600-700. His breakdown of the number of attacks was: pipelines, 398; refineries, 36; oil wells, 18; tanker trucks, 30; oil train, 1; storage tanks 4; and 1 tank farm. In addition, there were at least sixty-four incidents in which the victims were related to Iraq’s petroleum sector, ranging from high ranking persons in the Oil Ministry to oil workers at refineries, pipelines, and elsewhere in the sector, to contract, military, police, and tribal security people. The number killed in these directed attacks reached at least 100.997

The end result was that oil production dropped by 8% in 2005, and pipeline shipments through the Iraqi northern pipeline to Ceyan in Turkey dropped from 800,000 barrels per day before the war to an average of 40,000 barrels per day in 2005. In July 2005, Iraqi officials estimated that insurgent attacks had already cost Iraq some $11 billion. Attacks kept Iraqi oil production from approaching the 3 million barrel a day goal in 2005 goal that the Coalition had set after the fall of Saddam Hussein, and production had dropped from pre-war levels of around 2.5 million barrels a day to an average of 1.83 million barrels a day in 2005, and only 1.57 million barrels a day in December 2005.998 These successes have major impact in a country where 94% of the government’s direct income now comes from oil exports. Attacks on pipelines also took place, costing billions of dollars in lost exports and slowing the rehabilitation of Iraq’s dilapidated oil infrastructure.999

Between the March 2003 invasion and the end of 2005, the continuing threat to electric facilities, rolling power cuts in most areas, and major shortages forced many Iraqis to rely on home or neighborhood generators even in the areas with power. It was also a reason that the US was only able to spend $1.0 billion of $4.4 billion in programmed aid money on the electricity sector by the end of April 2005, and $261 million out of $1.7 billion on the petroleum sector.1000

Sabotage and theft helped cripple many of the country’s 229 operating water plants by the spring of 2005. Some 90% of the municipalities in the country lacked working sewage processing plants, contaminating the main sources of water as they drained into the Tigris and Euphrates.

Oil pipelines in the northern part of the country came under repeated attacks in late 2005. According to Iraqi Oil Minister Ibrahim Bahr al-Ulum, the upsurge in attacks began in mid-August, following the deadline for writing Iraq’s Constitution. Between August 15 and September 7, there were more than 10 attacks on pipelines.1001

The situation continued to deteriorate as the date of the referendum approached. The pipelines, linking oil fields in Kirkuk to Iraq’s largest oil refinery in Beiji and the Turkish port of Cheyhan, were disrupted more than half-a-dozen times during September and October 2005:1002

- September 3, 2005: Insurgents bombed the main pipeline running from Kirkuk to Cheyhan, disrupting Iraqi oil exports for more than two weeks and costing billions of dollars in lost revenue.
- September 13, 2005: A fire broke out after a pipeline carrying crude oil from Kirkuk to a Beiji refinery sprang a leak.
- September 15, 2005: Another fire broke out in an oil pipeline in Kirkuk; the cause of the fire was unknown.
- September 21, 2005: A bomb planted by insurgents damaged an oil pipeline connecting the Bay Hassan oil fields to Kirkuk. Repairs were expected to take up to a week.
- October 6, 2005: Insurgents bombed a pipeline near Kirkuk.
- October 12, 2005: An explosion shut down an oil pipeline near the city of Beiji.
- October 20, 2005: Insurgents bombed a pipeline linking Kirkuk to Beiji.
- October 25, 2005: Insurgents bomb the Beiji petroleum refinery, killing at least five.
On the eve of the October referendum, insurgents attacked Baghdad’s electrical grid. In a tactic designed to disrupt the vote, insurgents sabotaged power lines and electricity towers north of the capital, leaving 70 percent of the city in the dark.\footnote{1003} Even before the attack, however, the amount of electricity Baghdad received was a major bone of contention, with daily electricity service in the capital averaging less than 8 hours per day compared to the national average of 14 hours.\footnote{1004}

Insurgents also proved adept at exploiting the country’s fuel crisis in late December 2005 and early January 2006. Oil exports fell from their post-war average of about 1.6 million bpd (barrels per day) to 1.2 million bpd in November 2005 and 1.1 million bpd in December, the lowest since the country resumed exports after the US-led invasion.\footnote{1005} A total of 508 million barrels were exported in 2005, down from the 533 million barrels sold the previous year. As a whole, Iraqi oil production fell 8 percent in 2005.\footnote{1006} Exports from oil fields in the south, which produce the majority of Iraqi oil, fell from 514 million barrels in 2004 to 496 million in 2005. Northern production dropped from 19 million to 12 million. The drop in production for the southern oil fields was attributed to bad weather in the Gulf and a lack of electricity to run the refineries. Sabotage and persistent attacks by insurgents were blamed for the decline in the north.\footnote{1007} In late December, Iraqi Oil Minister Ibrahim Bahr al-Ulum announced that Iraq hoped to produce at least 2.5 million barrels of oil per day by the end of 2006. Only weeks before, however, he had said the country hoped to turn out 3.0 million barrels per day by the end of the next year, reaching 3.5 million bpd by December 2007.\footnote{1008}

On December 18, 2005, only three days after parliamentary elections, the Iraqi government raised the price of gasoline, diesel, kerosene and cooking gas. The Iraqi government had continued Saddam Hussein’s policy of subsidizing fuel prices, but faced growing pressure from the IMF and others to increase the price of fuel.\footnote{1009} The price of imported gasoline was raised fivefold, while the price of locally produced gasoline rose sevenfold. Kerosene prices increased fivefold and cooking gas increased threefold.\footnote{1010} The price hike sparked violent demonstrations in several cities, including Tikrit and Amarah. Iraq’s oil minister spoke out against the price hikes and threatened to resign in protest.

The fuel crisis was compounded a few days later on December 21, when the oil ministry was forced to close the country’s largest oil refinery after tanker-truck drivers went on strike. Although insurgents have repeatedly attacked oil installations in the north, they stepped up their threats to attack drivers in late December as part of an effort to take advantage of the fuel price hike and the public’s anger.\footnote{1011} The closure of the Beiji refinery, which normally produces 8.5 million liters of petrol per day along with 7.5 million liters of diesel, cost the Iraqi government some 18 million dollars a day.\footnote{1012} On December 30, the government relieved Bahr al-Ulum of his duties for 30 days as oil minister, putting Ahmed Chalabi, the deputy premier, in charge.\footnote{1013} As mentioned above, al-Ulum had been critical of the government’s decision to reduce fuel subsidies.

Protests, many of which turned violent, continued throughout the country into early January. In Kirkuk, the governor was forced to impose an overnight curfew after fuel riots on January 1 killed at least one person and wounded four others. In Basra, 1,000 people burned tires to protest the price increases.\footnote{1014} Insurgents responded by stepping up the number of attacks against the oil infrastructure, blowing up an oil pipeline near a Baghdad refinery and setting two petrol stations, along with offices belonging to the national oil company, on fire in Kirkuk in early January. Threats by insurgents led to the shutdown of Iraq’s most productive oil facility in Baiji.\footnote{1015} Although the truck drivers returned to work on January 3, the insurgents continued their attacks, ambushing three separate convoys and killing at least two tanker-drivers the following day.\footnote{1016} A sixty-tanker convoy on its way to Baghdad hit an IED on January 4. Upon stopping another tanker was hit by a rocket. Police and oil officials reported that 20 tankers were destroyed, but an Oil Ministry spokesman, Asim Jihad, disputed that claim stating that convoys usually are no bigger than ten tankers and suggested that only one tanker was hit.\footnote{1017}

Iraqi oil production fell by 8 percent in 2005, with a sharp decline near year’s end that left average daily production at half the 3 million barrels envisioned by US officials at the outset of the war in 2003. Reasons for the shortfall include the poor state of the nation’s oil fields, a creaky infrastructure, poor management and ongoing insurgent attacks.\footnote{1018} The average oil production for the first four months of 2006 was 1.9 mbpd, well short of the Iraqi Ministry of Oil goal of 2.5 mbpd. At the same time, exports increased from an average of 1.2 mbpd in the first quarter to 1.4 mbpd.\footnote{1019}

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The May 2006 “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq” report to Congress noted that monthly attacks against infrastructure had been declining since August of 2005 and that by May 2006 such attacks only accounted for 1% of overall insurgent attacks. Some of these included:

- **February 1, 2006**: A homemade bomb blew up a section of pipeline linking a Baghdad oil refinery to a power station south of the capital, disrupting electricity supplies for thousands of Iraqis in several southern Iraqi cities.

- **February 2, 2006**: A mortar attack set ablaze a major petroleum facility in the northern city of Kirkuk, stopping refining at the plant. Mortar rounds also hit an important pipeline to Turkey that was already out of commission and was being repaired.

- **February 17, 2006**: Insurgents blew up the main pipeline feeding crude oil from the northern oil fields of Kirkuk to a refinery in the southern Baghdad suburb of Dora and stopping the flow of oil.

- **March 8, 2006**: A bomb exploded at the Basra headquarters of Iraq's South Oil Co., causing minor damage but no casualties.

- **March 31, 2006**: In the outskirts of Baghdad, insurgents set off explosives underneath an oil pipeline that runs from Beijito the Dora district in southern Baghdad.

- **May 24, 2006**: A bomb explosion set fire to an oil pipeline in Latifiya.

The impact of such attacks has been further compounded the ability of insurgents to steal oil and fuel. The *New York Times* has quoted Ali Allawi, Iraq's finance minister, as estimating that insurgents were taking some 40 percent to 50 percent of all oil-smuggling profits in the country, and had infiltrated senior management positions at the major northern refinery in Baji: “It's gone beyond Nigeria levels now where it really threatens national security…The insurgents are involved at all levels.” The *Times* also quoted an unidentified US official as saying that, "It's clear that corruption funds the insurgency, so there you have a very real threat to the new state…Corruption really has the potential of undercutting the growth potential here." The former oil minister, Ibrahim Bahr al-Ulum, had said earlier in 2005 that "oil and fuel smuggling networks have grown into a dangerous mafia threatening the lives of those in charge of fighting corruption." Some of these included:

- **November 27, 2006**: Mortar attacks set ablaze oil storage tanks in northern Iraq on Monday, police said, and a source at the state North Oil Company said the attack may mean a protracted cut in output from oilfields in the region. The blaze in the oil facility at Arafa in the north of the city of Kirkuk will, however, not affect crude exports via pipeline to Turkey, the source said.

- **December 6, 2006**: Eight people bunkering crude oil from a pipeline near the town of Fatha, were killed in an explosion late on Wednesday, police said.

The August-November Department of Defense Quarterly Report stated that attacks on infrastructure declined in 2006. There was an average of one attack per week on infrastructure providing essential services. However, the report notes that the overall security environment prevented repairs on infrastructure and contributed to poor delivery of essential services.

**Strike at US aid projects, nation building and stability targets to undermine Iraqi acceptance of the MNSTC-I and the perceived legitimacy of the Iraqi government.** It is unclear just how systematic such attacks have been, but a report by the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction indicates that at least 276 civilians working on US aid projects had been killed by March 31, 2005, and at least 2,582 had been wounded. The number of contractors killed also rose by 19% (to 44) in the first quarter of 2005. The cost impact is also high. The report indicates that the security costs of USAID funded aid projects were only 4.2% of the total cost from March 2003 to February 2004, but rose to 22% during the final nine months of 2004. Other reports indicated that contractors had filed 2,919 death and injury claims for US and foreign workers between the beginning of the war on March 19, 2003 and May 10, 2003.
In April 2006, the Department of Defense agreed that US military forces would be used to provide security for reconstruction teams being sent to Iraq to coordinate US aid. The Department of Defense and Department of State had previously disagreed on whether private security forces or U.S. military service members would be used to provide the security.\footnote{1025}

There is nothing new about attacking key economic targets, infrastructure, and aspects of governance critical to the functioning of the state in an effort to disrupt its economy, undermine law enforcement and security, and encourage instability. Iraqi insurgent and Islamist attacks on aid workers and projects, and their role in encouraging looting, sabotage and theft did, however, demonstrate a growing sophistication in targeting stability efforts and tangible progress in aid and governance. These tactics also interact synergistically with the above tactics.

On December 8, 2006 Insurgents blew up a school under construction in the Yarmouk district of Mosul.

- **Focus on Large US Installations:** As the insurgents became better organized, they moved from hit and run firings at US installations to much larger and better organized raids that could capture major media attention even when these largely failed. The major Zarqawi organization assault on Abu Ghraib prison in early April 2005 was an example of such a raid.\footnote{1026} Other examples are the suicide bombing and infiltration attacks on the “Green Zone” in Baghdad and other major US military facilities in areas like Mosul. In addition, the US military reported insurgent attacks on military bases in the western city of Ramadi with mortars and small arms almost immediately after the results of the December election were announced.

Despite a general shift in attacks away from Coalition forces and toward Iraqi military, police and civilians as the insurgency continued, a plot was uncovered in March 2006 in which 421 al-Qa'ida members were “one bureaucrat’s signature” away from being admitted into the Iraqi Army battalions in charge of guarding entrances to the Green Zone. These fighters then planned on storming US and British embassies, taking those inside hostage.\footnote{1027}

Insurgents also staged large scale attacks on Iraqi installations as well. On March 21, Nearly 100 insurgents armed with automatic rifles an RPGs stormed a jail in north Baghdad, killing 20 police and a courthouse guard in a prison break that freed 33 prisoners; 18 of whom had been captured in police raids just two days earlier. The assault left 10 attackers dead. They cut the telephone wires before they entered to prevent the police from calling for backup and detonated a series of roadside bombs as they fled to prevent a chase.

The following day US and Iraqi forces trapped dozens of insurgents during a two-hour gun battle at a police station south of Baghdad. Sixty gunmen, firing rocket-propelled grenades and automatic rifles, attacked the Madain police station before dawn. US troops and a special Iraqi police unit responded, capturing 50 of the insurgents. Four policemen, including one commander, were killed and five were wounded. None of the attackers were killed. In another instance the following day two policemen were killed and two were wounded when gunmen ambushed their convoy in north Baghdad. The police said that the attack was a failed attempt to free detainees being transferred.

On April 8 a Marine firefight occurred when insurgents launched an attack against the Anbar provincial government headquarters in Ramadi. A US Air Force F-18 fighter bombed insurgent positions. US Marines guarding the government headquarters fought back with anti-tank rockets, machine guns and small-arms fire. In the same month, at an entrance to the capital’s Green Zone, a rocket killed five people and injured three. In another instance, more than 100 insurgents fired RPGs on five police checkpoints, a police station and an Iraqi Army building in Baquba.

On October 11, 2006 insurgents hit an ammunition dump on a U.S. base in Baghdad with a mortar round, setting off fiery explosions through the night that shook buildings miles away. No injuries were reported, but it was first large scale attack on US bases for some time.

- **Obtain and use uniforms and ID of Iraqi security forces to gain access to restricted areas and confuse the identity of the attacker:** The use of Iraqi uniforms, security and army vehicles, false IDs, and intelligence gained from infiltrators became more sophisticated. For example, in the mainly Sunni Arab neighborhood of Toubji, dozens of armed men dressed in Interior Ministry police uniforms killed three Sunnis and abducted more than 20 in January 2006. Also in January, two suicide bombers using police identity cards and dressed in military uniforms attempted to enter an MOI building and detonate the
explosives outside killing 29 Iraqis. Next door, a ceremony honoring the 84th anniversary of the Iraqi police force was being conducted.

In late 2005, insurgents wearing Iraqi army uniforms burst into the home of Khadim Sarhid al-Hemaiyem, a Sunni candidate in the upcoming elections and the head of Iraq’s Batta clan, killing him along with three of his sons and his son-in-law.

Insurgents and Islamists learned that a mix of silence, multiple claims to be the attacker, new names for attacking organizations, and uncertain levels of affiliation made it harder for the US to respond. They also produced more media coverage and speculation.

In Iraq and elsewhere, attacks have often been accompanied by what seem to be deliberate efforts to advance conspiracy theories to confuse the identity of the attacker or to find ways to blame defenders of the US for being attacked. In addition, conspiracy theories charging the US with deliberately or carelessly failing to provide an adequate defense have been particularly effective.

As sectarian conflict and low-level civil war increased, many of the abductions and killings were conducted by individuals wearing MOI commando uniforms. Although the MOI continued to deny its role in any of the violence, the strong militia presence in the security forces became a source of tension between the US and the Shi’ite dominated Iraqi government.

On June 5, 2006, in the morning, less than a mile from the Green Zone in a commercial district, about 50 masked-men wearing Interior police uniforms and driving ministry vehicles cordoned off the street and abducted as many as 50 people, forcing them into the backs of trucks at gunpoint, tying some and blindfolding others. Witnesses said that there seemed to be no discretion as to who was rounded up and that the operation took less than 20 minutes. The Interior Ministry said that the area was under the jurisdiction of the Defense Ministry, but it would still open an investigation.

In another incident, on September 12, 2006 in Baghdad, a man yelled at policemen, telling them that they were responsible for the destruction of his shop on Abu Nawas Street. The men threatened the police officers, saying that he would kill “one of them” on that day, but the officers failed to prevent him from speeding off in his car as they fired shots in his direction. Within seconds the situation deteriorated as men in blue police uniforms and black vests jumped out of a van and started shooting randomly up and down the street, sending families and the police officers for cover. Similar situations occurred on an almost daily basis to citizens in Baghdad, leaving people with no choice but to distrust anyone wearing a blue police uniform.

In an initiative to curb the use of MOI vehicles, weapons, and uniforms by insurgents the Iraqi government started identifying official vehicles and issuing new and different uniforms, according to US Army Colonel Thomas Vail in an address on September 1, 2006.

The new uniforms were officially put to use starting October 9, 2006. The new police garb featured camouflaged pants – similar to that worn by the US military – that would be difficult to counterfeit. The uniforms had serial numbers that would be linked in a computer database to photo IDs of the officers they were issued to. Police vehicles were also outfitted with new identification numbers. The goal of the new equipment was to reduce the ability of sectarian militias to create counterfeit uniforms and vehicles. US military officials said that they hoped the items would help increase civilian trust in Iraqi security forces.

- Use low-level killings, kidnappings, threats, disappearances, and intimidation to create added sectarian and ethnic conflict and strife: While major attacks and the use of weapons like mortars and IEDs get the most attention, insurgent groups also seem to play a role in a constant pattern of low-level violence against individuals designed to increase sectarian and ethnic tension. It is unclear that Sunni groups have ever used Iraqi forces uniforms or deliberately acted as if they were Shi’ites in attacking Sunnis, but they have been repeatedly accused of such tactics. It is clear that they have killed, intimidated, and blackmailed Shi’ites, Kurds, and pro-government individuals at a wide range of levels in an effort to drive them out of Sunni areas and create a constant climate of low-level violence designed to provoke a violent Shi’ite and Kurdish reaction.
The use of these tactics increased after the February Askariya shrine bombing. Masked gunmen or groups wearing MOI uniforms often targeted individuals in their homes or businesses. Some times the individuals were kidnapped and a ransom demanded, but more often they were gunned down on the spot or turned up later tortured and executed in one of the many “body dumps.” In most cases involving the kidnapped of children, the victims are released after the ransom is paid. Although Shi’ite militias both within and outside the ISF were to blame, surely Sunni insurgents and criminal groups conducted their own retaliatory strikes. Some of these events included:

- March 26, 2006: 10 bodies were found blindfolded, bound and shot in Baghdad, and 30 decapitated corpses were found in Baquba. Masked gunmen kidnapped 16 employees of the Saaed Import and Export Company in Baghdad.
- March 29, 2006: Gunmen in Iraqi commando uniforms rounded up 14 members of an electrical supply shop in Baghdad, and riddled them with machine-gun fire, killing 8 people and wounding 6.
- March 30, 2006: In Ramadi, three workers from the local hospital were found blindfolded and shot.
- March 31, 2006: 24 bodies of young men handcuffed and showing signs of torture were found in Amiriyah.
- April 1, 2006: Gunmen attacked a minibus carrying Shiites northeast of Baghdad, killing six men and wounding one woman.
- April 15, 2006: Gunmen wearing MOI commando uniforms and driving their standard issued trucks opened fire on guards outside of the Iraqna cellular phone company, wounding one guard whom they then abducted.
- April 16, 2006: Gunmen abducted 30 workers at a trading company.
- April 20, 2006: Gunmen in six pickup trucks stormed two bookstores in Baghdad, kidnapping six people. They were found six days later dead and all shot in the right eye.

According to US military officials in April, Shi’ite militias posed the greatest threat to Iraqi security. Additionally, these low-level assassinations in the month of March accounted for more than four times as many deaths as bombings and other mass-casualty attacks in the same month. Low-level assassinations and kidnappings continued to effect the daily lives of Iraqis:

- May 7, 2006: In Kirkuk, gunmen kidnapped Col. Sherzad Abdullah, an Iraqi army officer as he left for work. Two employees of the privately owned al-Nahrain television channel were kidnapped coming home from work.
- May 17, 2006: Fifteen members of the Iraqi Olympic Tae Kwon Do team were kidnapped between Falluja and Ramadi as they were returning from training in Jordan.
- May 20, 2006: In the same city, it was reported that 25 Sunni farmers were seized by Shi’ite militia from a Shi’ite neighborhood in retaliation for the abduction of Shi’ite truck drivers in Eshaqi.
- May 25, 2006: Gunmen barged into a wedding in Muqdadiya, northeast of Baghdad, kidnapping the groom, his uncle, his cousin and another guest. In Baqouba, armed men wearing Iraqi army uniforms kidnapped nine civilians. Four of the captives were security guards at the Diyala TV network, a provincial television and radio station. The fifth was an interpreter for US forces in the province; the others were government employees. All of the captives were Sunni.
- May 31, 2006: A member of the local council in Adhamiya, said that 18 Sunni men from the area had disappeared Monday after leaving in two vehicles to give blood in response to a bomb attack outside a local Sunni mosque.
- June 2, 2006: Gunmen killed Safa Alber, a Christian who worked as an engineer at the al-Hartha electric power station in Basra.
• June 5, 2006: In the morning, less than a mile from the Green Zone in a commercial district, about 50 masked-men wearing Interior police uniforms and driving ministry vehicles cordoned off the street and abducted as many as 50 people, forcing them into the backs of trucks at gunpoint, tying some and blindfolding others. Witnesses said that there seemed to be no discretion as to who was rounded up and that the operation took less than 20 minutes.

• June 18, 2006: Gunman captured ten Shi’ite bakery workers from the workplace in a Shi’a neighborhood in Baghdad.1033

• June 21, 2006: In the town of Taji, north of Baghdad, gunmen ambushed dozens of factory workers in one of the largest mass kidnappings of the Iraq war. Interior Ministry officials said that as many as 125 people were abducted, as gunmen seized three buses carrying workers leaving a factory, located in the largely Sunni area of Taji and owned by the Industry Ministry.

• July 13, 2006: In the Baghdad neighborhood of Adhamiya, gunmen killed Iraq’s national wrestling team coach, Mohammed Karim Abid Sahib.

• July 15, 2006: Gunmen in MOI uniforms kidnapped Ammar Jabbar Al-Saadi, head of Iraq’s Olympic Committee, as well as the deputy head of the Olympic Committee, the chairman of the Tae-kwon-do Federation, and the chief of the Boxing Federation Union.

• July 31, 2006: Gunmen kidnapped 26 in Arasat, a shopping street in Baghdad, including the head of the Iraqi-American Chamber of Commerce.

• August 1, 2006: Gunmen kidnapped 45 civilians from Al-Najaf.

• August 6, 2006: While traveling by bus, eight workers for the Nasir Company, part of the Ministry of Industry, were kidnapped. August 6, 2006: While traveling by bus, eight workers for the Nasir Company, part of the Ministry of Industry, were kidnapped.

During the month of August, 25 truck drivers and their vehicles disappeared along the same road from the Syrian border toward Baghdad.

UNAMI reported in the July - August Human Rights report that many kidnapping victims simply disappeared and their families had no information on their location. Many families received threatening letters telling them to leave their home and possessions behind. In many some cases, it appeared that militia groups moved into the abandoned homes.

In an address on September 1, 2006 US Army Colonel Thomas Vail said that US and Iraqi troops were undertaking a new broad initiative to increase security in the capital, which included capturing kidnappers. Vail reported that his unit, the 4th Brigade Combat Team of the 101st Airborne, had recently freed 20 kidnapped Iraqis and captured the perpetrators.1034

In September, reports surfaced that insurgents were using new tactics in suicide car bombings; instead of solely employing volunteer suicide bombers, insurgents began using kidnapped victims. Insurgents captured victims in their cars, rigged the cars with explosives, and then released the unknowing victims. Insurgents used a remote detonating device to explode the vehicles as the victims neared a police/army checkpoint or a public place.1035

• September 2, 2006: Ghanim Ghudayer, 22, considered one of the best soccer players in Baghdad's Air Force Club, was abducted Sunday evening by unknown assailants, some who were wearing military uniforms, police said.

• October 1, 2006: Gunmen kidnapped 26 workers from a refrigerated food factory in western Baghdad. The kidnapped workers included Shiites and Sunnis and three women. Police found ten of the bodies dumped in Baghdad the following day.

The US military attributed the kidnappings to Shi’ite militias. Iraq’s largest Sunni party, the Iraqi Islamic Party, questioned the ministry of interior about how victims from west Baghdad could get to the city center without being stopped at checkpoints. Sunnis charged Iraqi police with tolerating militias and in some
cases, even helping them get by checkpoints. However, the MOI suspended the national police commander in charge of the neighborhood where the kidnapping occurred and sent the 700 policeman brigade for “anti-militia” training. The interior ministry rarely acknowledged accountability in any way for sectarian kidnappings.

- October 2, 2006: Gunmen kidnapped 14 workers from Baghdad’s technical university. The gunmen wore police style uniforms and forced the victims into vehicles at gunpoint.
- October 31, 2006: Gunmen at a makeshift checkpoint north of Baghdad in Salah ad Din Province kidnapped 40 people on minibuses.
- November 2, 2006: Gunmen kidnapped a basketball coach of Iraq’s foremost team and a blind coach of an Iraqi blind team. Both men were Sunnis.
- November 11, 2006: Gunmen stopped three minibuses carrying Shi’ites in the town of Latifiya south of Baghdad, killed nine passengers and kidnapped 13 others.
- November 12, 2006: Gunmen kidnapped ten people in the town of Efeg.

On November 14, 2006 the largest mass kidnapping occurred since the US led invasion in 2003. Between 100 and 150 employees and visitors at the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Scholarships and Cultural Relations Directorate in the downtown Karradah district were kidnapped by about 80 gunmen. The Ministry was responsible for granting scholarships to professors and students wishing to study abroad. Witnesses said that the gunmen were dressed in police uniforms and cordoned off the street before they passed by four guards. The operation only took 15 minutes and the kidnappers locked the woman into one room in the building and then separated out the males into Sunni and Shi’ites. But the Higher Education Minister said that both Sunnis and Shi’ites were kidnapped. He also announced that classes at Universities would be suspended until further notice to protect professors and students. During the night, Iraqi police managed to free most of the captives, but some were still missing. Also on November 14, gunmen abducted 12 workers at a brick factory in a town near Diwaniya.

- December 2, 2006: Gunmen kidnapped Hidaib Mejhoul, a member of the national Iraqi Football Association, and he was found dead in Baghdad’s Yarmouk district, relatives said.
- December 17, 2006: Gunmen in police uniforms kidnapped dozens of people at a Red Crescent office in Baghdad. Police said 10 to 20 people were seized. Antonella Notari, spokeswoman for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Geneva, said at least 25 people had been taken by gunmen from among staff and visitors. The kidnappers released 17 people the following day.
- December 21, 2006: Iraq’s Olympic cycling coach was killed after gunmen kidnapped him from his home in the latest attack on one of the nation’s sports figures, officials said.

- Use threats and terror tactics to cause sectarian displacement: Both Sunni insurgents and Shi’ite militias began using threats and terror tactics after the February 22 bombing to drive either Sh’ite or Sunni families out of mixed neighborhoods in order to make one sect predominate.

Similar tactics were often employed. Leaflets were frequently distributed by gunmen or even by children. In some instances, those who had fled did so after hearing their names on a list of “enemies” read out at a Sunni mosque. It was also reported that “religious vigilantes” would paint black crosses, referred to as “the mark of death,” on the doors of those it sought to drive out. Young children were sometimes abducted for several hours and then returned to their families with a warning that if they did not leave, next time their children would be killed.

By mid-April, the Ministry of Displacement Migration put the number at 60,000 people. A spokesman for the ministry estimated that every day 1,000 Iraqi’s are being forced to flee their homes. Much of the displacement occurred in and around the capital, traditionally a mixed city.

Between March 22 and April 15 the number of displaced Iraqis tripled from 23,000 to almost 70,000 people. By April 19, the total number of Iraqis displaced from sectarian violence was estimated to be 80,000 by the President of the Iraqi Red Crescent Society, Said Hakki. This included over 7,000 Shi’ite
families and about 2,800 Sunni families.\footnote{1042} This total steadily climbed and by mid-May, Iraqi immigration officials said that between 90,000 and 100,000 individuals had been displaced, or 15,000 families.\footnote{1045}

It was far from clear how methodical these targeted secular evictions were. Because they were perpetrated by a combination of gangs, insurgents and militias, and targeted both Sunnis and Shiites, it seemed unlikely that a concerted effort by a single or even a few organizations was at work. However, Mr. Hakki noted that in most cases, the threats were coming from groups based outside of the neighborhoods. “They are highly organized,” he said, “It is not happening in a haphazard way.”\footnote{1044} However, the story told by one auto-parts storeowner is Baghdad was perhaps more illustrative of the way Iraqis view the violence. Once a month gunmen came to his business to collect $300 in “protection money.” “They say they’re with the insurgency and that they’re protecting me from worse things. Who knows the truth…I just pay. We all pay.”\footnote{1045}

According to a memo attributed to al-Qa’ida in May 2006, it appeared that the displacement of Shiites was a new element of the terrorist organization’s strategy in Iraq. The memo, found in an al-Qa’ida “hide out” in Yousifiya by US forces, calls on followers to “displace the Shiites and displace their shops and businesses from our areas.”\footnote{1046}

The situation only deteriorated into the summer. The Ministry of Migration put the official number of refugees at 162,000, or roughly 27,000 families, since the Samarra mosque bombing. The Ministry reported that some 30,000 more people had registered as refugees in July. The dramatic increase forced the Ministry to build more temporary encampments, including one in the southern Shiite city of Diwaniya, where 10,000 refugees arrived in only a few weeks. One man who lived just south of Baghdad recollected his last moments at home: “Gunmen told us to leave or they would kill us.” The increase clearly stemmed from continued sectarian violence and revenge killings since the mosque bombing in February 2006.\footnote{1047}

According to the July-August 2006 Human Rights update by UNAMI, 300,000 Iraqis were displaced following the February 22 Samarra mosque bombing. The majority of the displaced appeared to flow from Baghdad, but almost all of the Governorates were affected. The Kurdistan Regional Government reported that 50,000 refugees arrived in the northern region of Kurdistan during the six-month period.\footnote{1048} The September – October Human Rights update increased the number of displaced to 400,000.

On December 10, 2006 Shi’ite militias attacked Sunni homes in Baghdad’s Hurriya district, Interior Ministry officials and witnesses said. More than 30 families fled after the militias torched homes and killed at least one person.

• **Exploit Arab satellite television as well as traditional media:** Islamist movements and other insurgents learned how to capture maximum exposure in regional media, use the Internet, and above all, exploit the new Arab satellite news channels. Insurgents and terrorist also pay close attention to media reactions, and tailor their attacks to high profile targets that make such attacks “weapons of mass media.” Al Qa’ida has repeatedly demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the role the media plays in advancing or weakening their organization. Ayman al-Zawahiri, Al Qa’ida’s No.2, has described the conflict as taking place “in the battlefield of the media” and has admitted that the organization is engaged “in a media battle in a race for the hearts and minds of [Muslims]” with the West.\footnote{1049}

Zarqawi’s Al Qa’ida in Iraq group took their attempted manipulation of the news media to new heights in June 2005. In an Internet statement, the organization severely criticized the Al Jazeera satellite television station for what it called impartial reporting. It claimed that Al Jazeera, long criticized by US officials, had “sided” with the US over Iraq.

There has been some evidence to suggest that the jihadis might be losing the media battle. Zarqawi has issued “retractions” or “clarifications” after unpopular attacks or statements. After his declaration of “total war” on Shiites in the summer of 2005 received a very cool response from the larger jihadist community, Zarqawi issued a partial retraction. Zarqawi responded in a similar way after the November 9 bombings in Amman. The backlash from the Muslim world, especially within Jordan itself, was enough to prompt Zarqawi to issue several statements denying Jordanians had been the targets of the attacks. Such statements and retractions suggest Zarqawi may be on the defensive and that his group is growing increasingly vulnerable to Muslim public opinion.
In what may prove to be a harbinger of future tactics, insurgents have begun to attack the media directly. On July 14, 2005, gunmen attacked a television crew in Baghdad, wounding three men. In October 2005, unknown gunmen attacked a broadcasting and television compound in Mosul in October. Another direct attack on the media came almost exactly a year later. On October 12, 2006 gunmen stormed the offices of Shaabiya, an Iraqi satellite channel in Baghdad. The assailants raided the building, killing seven guards and employees. The attack was the work of one of the many sectarian deaths squads operating in Baghdad.

- Exploit the internet as well as traditional media; a tool for propaganda as well as communication and exchange of tactical methods and techniques: More and more web sites appear from extremist movements and terrorist groups that publicize the actions of such groups or make false or exaggerated claims. Dissemination of video, pictures, and accounts of insurgent attacks are part of an effort by the various groups to promote the image of a “chaotic” environment in Iraq in which the Iraqi government cannot maintain order and stability and Coalition forces are suffering tactical losses. According to a report by the Army’s Training and Doctrine Command, “the insurgent videos have grown complex and sophisticated, with detailed graphics, English subtitles, English narrators [and] Jihadist humor.” Iraqi terrorist and insurgent organizations have learned the media and analysts regularly monitor such sites and they furnish a low-cost source of publicity. According to one report, the number of Iraqi insurgent websites increased from 145 to 825 between January and December 2005. At the same time, the flood of web site activity makes it difficult to know when sites are being used for communications. Terrorist and insurgent organizations from all over the world have established the equivalent of an informal tactical net in which they exchanges techniques for carrying out attacks, technical data on weapons, etc.

Insurgent videos of attacks can be useful for the Coalition as well. The intelligence division of the Army’s Training and Doctrine Command has been incorporating them as an instructive tool and analyzing them for a way to avoid casualties. However, there was no indication of whether this addition to the training has had any measurable effect on reducing coalition vulnerability to attack, or making soldiers more adept at avoiding roadside bombs.

Shi’ite militias also started using the internet as a tactic in 2006. The growth of Shi’ite militias after the Samarra mosque bombing in February progressively produced vast numbers of militia members across Baghdad. Reprisal killings between Sunni and Shi’ite militias during the summer of 2006 became the primary cause of death in Iraq. By October, Shi’ite death squads began posting their execution lists on websites. Newsweek reported that at least eight websites existed with execution information on targets occupation and addresses. And Sunni death squads in the capital followed suit. The Sunni sites provided information about which police units and government agencies were infiltrated by militias. Operation Together Forward II was having enough trouble curtailing sectarian violence on the ground in the fall of 2006, let alone on cyberspace.

- Use the media to target and develop the equivalent of swarming techniques: Iraqi terrorist and insurgent organizations have learned that media reporting on the results of their attacks provides a powerful indicator of their success and what kind of attack to strike at in the future. While many attacks are planned long in advance or use “targeting” based on infiltration and simple observation, others are linked to media reporting on events, movements, etc. The end result is that insurgents can “swarm” around given types of targets, striking at vulnerable points where the target and method of attack is known to have success.

- Maintain a strategy of constant attrition, but strike hard according to a calendar of turning points and/or at targets with high political, social, and economic impact: Insurgents and Islamists learned the importance of a constant low-level body count and the creation of a steady climate of violence. This forces the US into a constant, large-scale security effort; makes it difficult for Iraqi forces to take hold; puts constant pressure on US and Iraqi forces to disperse; and ensures constant media coverage.

At the same time, insurgents and Islamists showed a steadily more sophisticated capability to exploit holidays, elections and other political events, and sensitive targets both inside the countries that are the scene of their primary operations and in the US and the West. Attacks on Kurdish and Shi’ite religious festivals are cases in point.
So was an attack on Abu Ghraib prison, the site of many media reports on the abuse of Iraqi prisoners on April 2, 2005. The prison still held some 3,446 detainees and the insurgent attack was conducted by 40-60 insurgents, lasted nearly 40 minutes, and was large and well organized enough to wound 20 US troops. After the third anniversary since the beginning of the war in Iraq, President Bush made several speeches in which he referred to the city of Tal Afar as a success story and “a free city that gives reason for hope for a free Iraq.” Several days later, 40 Iraqi’s were killed and 30 wounded when a suicide bomber penetrated an Iraqi army recruiting office near a US-Iraqi military base.

- **Push “hot buttons”:** Try to find forms of attack that provoke disproportionate fear and “terror” to force the US Iraqi forces into costly, drastic, and sometimes provocative responses: Terrorists and insurgents have found that attacks planned for maximum political and psychological effects often have the additional benefit of provoking over-reaction. Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad exploited such tactics throughout the peace process.

One example of such attacks that put constant pressure on Americans, demonstrated insurgent “strength,” and got high profile media attention was the long series of attacks on the secure areas in the “Green Zone” in Baghdad and along the road from that zone to the Baghdad airport. Attacking the airport road was an almost perfect way of keeping up constant psychological and political pressure. It passed through a hostile Sunni area, was almost impossible to secure from IEDs, VBIEDs, rocket and mortar attacks, and sniping without pinning down large numbers of troops. This helps explain why there were well over 100 attacks on targets moving along the road during January 30 through May 4, 2005.

- **Game Regional, Western, and other outside media:** Use interview access, tapes, journalist hostage takings and killings, politically-led and motivated crowds, drivers and assistants to journalists, and timed and targeted attacks to attempt to manipulate Western and outside media. Manipulate US official briefings with planted questions.

- **Use Americans and other foreigners as proxies:** There is nothing new about using Americans and other foreigners as proxies for local regimes, or attacking them to win support for ideological positions and causes. There has, however, been steadily growing sophistication in the timing and nature of such attacks, and in exploiting softer targets such as American businessmen in the country of operations, in striking at US and allied targets in other countries, or in striking at targets in the US. It is also clear that such attacks receive maximum political and media attention in the US.

- **Attack UN, NGO, embassies, aid personnel, and foreign contractor business operations:** Attacking such targets greatly reduces the ability to carry out nation building and stability operations to win hearts and minds. Attacking the “innocent,” and curtailing their operations or driving organizations out of the country has become an important focus of insurgents and Islamist extremist attacks. Iraqi insurgents have pursued this tactic since the first days of the insurgency.

In November of 2005, Al Qa’ida divulged new details about the April 19, 2003 bombing of the U.N. headquarters in Baghdad, one of the first major attacks of the Iraqi insurgency and the first to intentionally target foreigners. The 2003 bombing killed 23 people, including the head of the U.N. mission, Sergio Vieira de Mello, the Iraqi coordinator for the U.N. children’s fund, UNICEF, and several World Bank staffers, and injured more than 150. In a statement posted on an Islamic radical website, Al Qa’ida said the attack had been planned by Thamir Mubarak Atrouch, a Sunni Arab from the town of Khaldiyah in Anbar province. Atrouch, a former officer in Saddam Hussein’s army had fled to Saudi Arabia but returned to Iraq before the US-led invasion of Iraq began in March 2003 in order to fight Americans. He was killed by US forces in Fallujah in April 2004. The 2003 bombing of U.N. headquarters in Baghdad, although the most famous attack on diplomatic offices in Baghdad, is hardly the only such incident since the insurgency began, however. Insurgents have also periodically fired mortars against US facilities inside the Green Zone.

Insurgents stepped up their attacks against foreign diplomats in the summer and fall of 2005. In July, Al Qa’ida in Mesopotamia killed two Algerian diplomats and one Egyptian. The group also attempted to kidnap Bahraini and Pakistani embassy staff, though the former escaped with light wounds and the latter was unharmed. Insurgent attacks against diplomats in the fall and winter of 2005 included:
October 10, 2005: Gunmen ambushed a convoy of Arab League diplomats in Baghdad, wounding two Iraqi policemen.


October 20, 2005: Two Moroccan embassy employees were kidnapped on the highway from Amman to Baghdad. On November 3, Al Qa’ida in Mesopotamia posted a statement on a website saying Abdelkrim el-Mohsfdi, a Moroccan diplomat, and Abderahim Boualem, his driver, would be executed. The group said the executions were meant as “an example for others who are still thinking to challenge the mujahedeen and dare to come to the land of the two rivers.”

November 7, 2005: A Sudanese diplomat, Taha Mohammed Ahmed, is hit by a stray bullet while walking in the garden of the Sudanese Embassy in Baghdad.

November 9, 2005: Hammouda Ahmed Adam, a Sudanese Embassy employee was killed by unknown gunmen while driving in the Mansour district of Baghdad.

November 12, 2005: Insurgents attacked the Omani Embassy in Baghdad, killing an Iraqi police officer and an embassy employee.

November 20, 2005: The US military announced it had arrested five terrorists suspected of plotting to attack the Italian Embassy in Baghdad.

December 23, 2005: Gunmen kidnapped a Sudanese diplomat and five other men as they left a mosque in Baghdad.

As is evident from the examples listed above, insurgents have repeatedly singled out envoys from Arab and Muslim countries in their attacks. Al Qa’ida in Mesopotamia’s strategy appears to be aimed at driving representatives of these countries from Iraq in order to weaken the new Iraqi government and to divide US allies.

In a statement released on November 3, the organization called on diplomats in Baghdad to “pack their bags and leave” or face certain death. The statement, signed by the military wing of Al Qa’ida in the Land of the Two Rivers, read: “We are renewing our threat to those so-called diplomatic missions who have insisted on staying in Baghdad and have not yet realized the repercussions of such a challenge to the will of the mujahedeen.”

Al Qa’ida’s strategy has, however, had some success. The Philippine Embassy in Baghdad relocated its staff to Jordan after the July 2005 attacks on Algerian and Egyptian diplomats. The previous summer, the Philippine government granted insurgent’s demands and withdrew its peacekeeping contingent from Iraq in order to secure the safe release of a Filipino hostage. The kidnapping of Angelo de la Cruz in July 2004 led Manila to issue a ban on its citizens working in Iraq. The government re-issued the ban in November 2005, after two Filipino contract workers were killed in Iraq.

On December 23, gunmen kidnapped six Sudanese nationals, including five embassy employees. The men were captured while leaving a mosque in Baghdad. Abdel Monem al-Huri, the embassy’s second secretary, was among the hostages. Al Qa’ida in Iraq claimed responsibility in an Internet statement on December 29 and demanded that Khartoum break off all diplomatic relations with Iraq immediately. The Sudanese government closed its embassy in Baghdad and withdrew its diplomats the following day. On December 31, insurgents released the five Sudanese diplomats.

These attacks limit the ability of the elected government to establish international legitimacy and credibility. Governments whose personnel suffer an attack may not have the will to continue to pursue relations in the face of domestic discontent over any casualties and the Iraq war in general, as was the case with the Philippines. Such attacks can make the Iraqi government look powerless.

While there were as many as 40 diplomatic missions in Iraq as of late 2005, several countries have been hesitant to send ambassadors to Baghdad. At least two of Iraq’s neighbors, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, have postponed doing so until the security situation in the country improves.

These kidnappings and killings continued into 2006.
• January 18, 2006: Police said gunmen killed 10 security guards and seized an African engineer in an ambush in Baghdad.

• January 21, 2006: British security company contractor Stephen Enwright, 30, was killed Thursday in a roadside bomb in Iraq.

• January 24, 2006: Two German Engineers were kidnapped from their homes by insurgents who gained access to the compound by pretending to be police.

• February 20, 2006: Two Macedonian contractors, meanwhile, were released Monday in the southern city of Basra after being kidnapped Thursday.

• March 9, 2006: A woman who worked for a human rights group in the Green Zone was gunned down as she left her west Baghdad home.

• March 10, 2006: An American who was among four kidnapped activists from a Chicago-based Christian group was killed in Iraq.


• March 29, 2006: Reporter Jill Caroll was released by her captors after being held as a hostage for three months.

• April 4, 2006: A receptionist at the United Arab Emirates Embassy and a friend were killed as they left the building.

• April 12, 2006: Two Iraqi contractors supplying the army with food were forced off the road and shot by insurgents near Kirkuk.

• May 2, 2006: Two German hostages were freed after being held by their captors for more than three months.

• May 16, 2006: A U.A.E. diplomat was abducted in the Mansour district of Baghdad after gunmen shot his Sudanese bodyguard.

• June 3, 2006: In Baghdad, a Russian diplomat was killed and four diplomatic employees were kidnapped.

• June 25, 2006: Gunmen executed four Russian Embassy workers held hostage since June 3, 2006.1065

• September 19, 2006: In Basra, at the Iranian consulate, one rocket hit the building, another struck a car parked outside, a third hit the compound wall and a fourth fell in the garden. The fifth landed outside the walls.

• September 24, 2006: Assailants in four cars pulled up outside the United Arab Emirates Embassy in Baghdad and fired a rocket-propelled grenade at it, but no one was injured.

• December 17, 2006: Gunmen in police uniforms kidnapped dozens of people at a Red Crescent office in Baghdad. Police said 10 to 20 people were seized. Antonella Notari, spokeswoman for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Geneva, said at least 25 people had been taken by gunmen from among staff and visitors. The kidnappers released 17 people the following day.

• Kidnap, kill, and/or intimidate women and cadres of foreign workers: Killing and kidnapping women, particularly those working in NGOs and aid projects gets great media attention and leads some organizations to leave the country. Kidnapping or killing groups of foreign workers puts political pressure on their governments, gets high local and regional media attention, and sometimes leads governments to stop their workers from going to Iraq.

Counts of kidnappings in Iraq, and analyses of responsibility, are necessarily uncertain and sharply undercount the number of kidnappings of Iraqis – many of which are never reported. An analysis of
kidnappings from April 1, 2004 to January 31, 2005 showed, however, that there were 264 foreign civilian
kidnappings. Some 47 were killed, 56 remained missing, 150 were released, five escaped, and a total of six
were rescued. Given the fact there were some 100,000 expatriates in Iraq at the time, this meant a roughly 1
in 380 chance of being kidnapped, and roughly 20% of the foreigners kidnapped were killed or
beheaded.1066

In November of 2005, the New York Times reported that of the more than 200 foreigners, who had been
abducted since the start of the war, several dozen had been killed and at least twenty were still missing.
When US troops entered Fallujah in November of 2004 they discovered bunkers where captives had been
held and tortured. After Fallujah, however, the number of foreign kidnappings dropped significantly.1067
Another estimate of foreigners kidnapped in Iraq placed the total at 268 at the end of January 2006. Of
those, 44 were killed, 135 were released, 3 escaped, 3 were rescued and the status of 81 were unknown.1068

The kidnapping of foreigners by insurgents returned in the fall of 2005. In late October, two Moroccans
were kidnapped by insurgents and held hostage. The following month, four aid workers, two Canadians, a
Briton and an American, were also kidnapped. A group calling itself “Swords of Truth” issued a claim of
responsibility, saying the four were “spies of the occupying forces.”1069 Also in November, two Filipino
contract workers were killed in a bombing of their convoy and a German archaeologist was kidnapped.

On December 5, gunmen abducted a French engineer in Baghdad. Less than a week later, on December 9,
insurgents kidnapped and killed an Egyptian engineer in Tikrit.1070 Camille Nassif Tannus, a Lebanese
engineer was kidnapped on December 29 but was released three days later.1071 According to the Lebanese
government, some 50 Lebanese working for private firms have been kidnapped since the 2003 US-led
invasion of Iraq. While most were released after the payment of ransoms, at least five were killed by their
captors.1072

In January, Jill Carroll, a reporter for the Christian Science Monitor, was kidnapped on her way to an
interview with a Sunni politician. Several days later a tape by her captors aired on al-Jazeera demanding the
release of Iraqi women prisoners and threatened to kill Ms. Carroll if their demands were not met in 72
hours. Although the US indicated that it was planning to release these prisoners, it denied that the action
had any relation to the insurgents’ demands. Despite this, subsequent tapes were aired by Carroll’s captors,
again, calling for the release of all Iraqi women in custody. Two German engineers were also kidnapped
from their homes during the same month.

• Expand the fighting outside Iraq: In an interview with ABC News in mid-November, Iraq’s Interior
Minister Bayan Jabr said he believed Zarqawi might be planning out-of-area operations. Jabr said his
ministry had uncovered information that Al Qa’ida in Mesopotamia was planning at least two other attacks—one in Yemen and the other in Egypt—against foreigners and Americans. Jabr also claimed that foreigners
had been recruited to come to Iraq in order to receive training so that they could return to their home
countries to carry out attacks. A few days later, US Army Maj. Gen. William Webster, whose 3rd Infantry
Division is responsible for security in Baghdad, said he believed it “a distinct possibility” that insurgents
were training in Iraq for attacks in other countries.1073

It is not clear exactly when Zarqawi and other insurgents began to consider attacking targets outside Iraq,
or when actual attempts began. Zarqawi, a Jordanian, began to attack targets in Jordan long before he went
to Iraq. In late 1999, he organized attacks on the Radisson SAS hotel in Amman and Jewish and Christian
religious targets. In October 2002, his followers killed Laurence Foley, as US diplomat assigned to the US
Embassy in Amman. He seems to have played a role in the bombing of the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad
in August 2003.

There are some indications that Zarqawi’s group began planning and attempting such attacks in late 2003.
Jordan reported that a Zarqawi agent named Azmi al-Jayousi led a cell that attempted to carry out a
massive explosive and chemical attack on the US Embassy, the headquarters of the Jordanian General
Intelligence Directorate, office of the prime minister and other targets in Amman in mid-April 2004.

Some sources say Jordan disrupted further attack attempts after that time, including a rocket attack on a US
warship in Aqaba earlier in 2005. One senior Jordanian source claimed that Jordan had foiled two attacks in
2003, eight in 2004, and 10 in 2005.1074
Zarqawi was the first major insurgent leader to openly threaten to expand the fighting to foreign countries, although his open statements only began to get serious publicity in the summer of 2005. Jordanian intelligence reported that it had intercepted signals that Zarqawi had ordered some of his fighters to leave Iraq to carry out attacks in other Arab and Islamic countries in October 2005.

Some experts believe the July 23, 2005 Sharm el-Sheik bombings signaled the expansion of Zarqawi’s network beyond Iraq. But the bombings at the Red Sea resort, which killed at least 88 and wounded more than 150, appear to have been the work of Egyptian radical Islamists. Three groups—the “Abdullah Azzam Brigades”; “Tawhid and Jihad Group in Egypt” and the “Holy Warriors of Egypt”-- claimed responsibility for the bombings. Although all three are believed to have ties to Al Qa’ida, there is no evidence to suggest Zarqawi was directly involved in the attack.

On November 9, 2005, Zarqawi’s operation in Iraq carried out three suicide bombings of US owned hotels in Amman. The attackers specifically targeted Jordanians -- including a large wedding party – and killed at least 60 people from some six different countries and wounded more than 100. Only a few Americans were killed or hurt in the attacks on the Radisson, Grand Hyatt and Days Inn. The casualties also included four Palestinian officials, one of who was Lt. General Bashir Nafe, the head of West Bank security.

- **Kidnap, kill, and/or intimidate professionals, Iraqi media and intelligentsia, and conduct “mystery killings:**” Steady killing and intimidation of individual professionals, media figures, and intelligentsia in threatened areas offers a series of soft targets that cannot be defended, but where a cumulative pattern of killing and intimidation makes governance difficult, creates major problems for security and police forces, weakens the economy, and exacerbates the general feeling of insecurity to the point where people lose faith in the Iraqi government, Coalition, and political process. According to the head of Iraqi Journalists Syndicate, Shihab al-Tamimi, kidnappings and assassinations targeting Iraqi journalists surged in the weeks leading up to the January 30 election.\(^{1075}\)

The US State Department report on Human Rights for 2004 states that the Ministry of Human Rights claimed that at least 80 professors and 50 physicians were assassinated during 2004. Reporters Without Borders noted that 31 journalists and media assistants were killed during the year. Universities also suffered from a wave of kidnappings. Researchers, professors, administrators, and students were all victims, including some who disappeared without a trace.\(^ {1076}\) According to the Iraqi newspaper Al-Mashriq, more than 3000 Iraqi doctors have left the country in order to save their lives since the start of the insurgency.\(^{1077}\)

In September 2005, a local Iraqi newspaper reported that after doctors and university professors, bakers had become the most popular target among insurgents in Iraq. In one 48-hour period, insurgents killed ten bakers in Baghdad alone. A number of bakeries were forced to close after receiving threats from insurgents.\(^ {1078}\)

Beginning in the fall of 2005, there were signs that insurgents had selected a new target: teachers. Up until that time, teachers had largely been spared the violence inflicted upon other occupations. In late September Sunni insurgents dressed as Iraqi police officers stormed the Jazeera primary school in Muwelha, a Sunni suburb of Iskandariya, killing five teachers and their driver.\(^ {1079}\) The attack raised fears among many Iraqis that insurgents would now begin to target Iraqi schools. A few days later, on September 29, gunmen opened fire on a mini-bus transporting teachers in the Al-Mansuriyah district of Baquba, killing one and wounding several.\(^ {1080}\)

On October 9, gunmen entered a school in Samarra and executed a teacher in front of students and other teachers.\(^ {1081}\) In all of the incidents, the teachers were Shi’ites, leaving many to believe that the attacks were motivated by sectarian violence rather than insurgent hostility toward their profession. A number of schools, many in Shi’ite neighborhoods, have responded to the wave of attacks by erecting security barriers and hiring guards.\(^ {1082}\) On October 20, a mortar hit a public school in the al-Mansour neighborhood of Baghdad, killing one student and wounding four others.\(^ {1083}\) Attacks on schools, however, are still relatively rare. University professors have also become popular targets for insurgents. In a five-day period in late November 2005 five university professors were killed, three of them in greater Baghdad area.\(^ {1084}\) In March 2005, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research said that 89 university professors had been killed since 2003. 311 teachers were allegedly murdered between December 2005 and March 2006. Academics themselves estimated that up to 105 of their colleagues have been assassinated.\(^ {1085}\) The Ministry...
of Health reports that between April 2003 and May 31, 2006 102 doctors were killed; 164 nurses were killed, and 142 non-medical staff were killed. Some estimates place the number of kidnapped Iraqi doctors as high as 250 in the past two years.\footnote{1086}

This environment of intimidation and violence compelled many academics to flee the country. In late June 2006, the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) estimated that more than 40 percent of Iraq’s professional class has left the country since 2003. According to the Committee, 350,000 left for Syria, 450,000 went to Jordan, and 90,000 moved to other parts of the world.\footnote{1087}

Attacks on Iraqi professionals and intelligentsia seemed to increase in 2006. In May 2006, for example, eight doctors were killed and another 42 wounded, according to Ministry of Health records. The increase in violence led to many doctors and health professionals to relocate to safer areas or to leave the country. The Ministry of Health in the Kurdish Regional Government reported that at least 33 doctors have relocated to the safer Kurdish region since January 2006.\footnote{1088} Although like much of the violence, motive was difficult to discern and criminal violence, the insurgency and tit-for-tat sectarian attacks all probably played a role in the deaths:

- January 2, 2006: Gunmen attacked an ambulance, killing the driver and two children.
- January 21, 2006: Gunmen also killed three butchers standing on a street side in the southern Baghdad neighborhood of Dora.
- January 28, 2006: In Dora, southern Baghdad, two gunmen killed a man in a barbershop. Gunmen shot dead university professor and political analyst Abdul-Razzaq al-Na'as in central Baghdad.
- February 1, 2006: Two reporters for the satellite television channel al-Sumariya were kidnapped after a meeting with officials of the Iraqi Islamic Party, the country's dominant Sunni Arab political organization.
- February 14, 2006: Gunmen attacked a group of Iraqi Shiites working on a farm north of Baghdad, killing 11 and wounding two.
- February 15, 2006: A bomb exploded near a camera shop, killing three girls and a boy on their way to school. Another car bomb killed two civilians near Baghdad's University of Technology. Gunmen elsewhere shot and killed a blacksmith at his Sadiyah workshop.
- February 16, 2006: Gunmen killed two owners of a convenience store that sold beer.
- February 17, 2006: Gunmen wearing Iraqi Special Forces uniforms kidnapped a wealthy banker and his son after killing five of their bodyguards. Police found the bodies of three men who had been shot execution-style in northern Baghdad. Two gunmen stormed into a fashion accessories store in southern Baghdad's Maalif area and shot dead two brothers working there. Drive-by gunmen also killed a cigarette salesman in Husseiniyah.
- February 19, 2006: In northern Baghdad, the owner of an ice cream shop was shot dead outside his store.
- March 6, 2006: Gunmen kidnapped a prominent university professor, Ali Hussein Khafaji, dean of the engineering college at Mustansiriya University.
- March 8, 2006: More gunmen pulled over a school bus carrying about 25 high school girls and shot the driver in front of his passengers. The wounded driver was hospitalized.
- March 9, 2006: A teacher was shot by gunmen in Dora, on Baghdad's southern edge.
- March 20, 2006: The owner of a small grocery in downtown Baghdad was shot and killed.
- March 24, 2006: In the Saydiyah district, south of Baghdad, gunmen killed four pastry shop employees and a roadside bomb killed a policeman.
• March 29, 2006: Gunmen in Iraqi commando uniforms rounded up 14 members of an electrical supply shop in Baghdad, and riddled them with machine-gun fire, killing 8 people and wounding 6.

• March 30, 2006: A lawyer was shot dead in Baghdad. In Ramadi, three workers from the local hospital were found blindfolded and shot. Al-Qa’ida reportedly claimed responsibility for the deaths, and a note left at the scene accused the men of being homosexuals.

• April 1, 2006: Gunmen killed three ice cream vendors in Dora and a butcher and his son in east Baghdad. In the Iskan neighborhood, gunmen killed the owner of an air conditioner repair shop on his way to work.

• April 2, 2006: In Baquba, three stores selling music CDs were also bombed.

• April 5, 2006: An architect was shot and killed while getting a haircut. A school supervisor was killed in a drive by shooting.

• April 10, 2006: In Baghdad, three vendors selling tubes of cooking gas were killed in a drive-by shooting.

• April 11, 2006: Gunmen killed a metal worker in the southwest Shurta neighborhood. In Basra, gunmen shot a Sunni professor as he was leaving his house.

• April 17, 2006: Gunmen kidnapped a doctor and six electrical engineers in two separate incidents.

• April 18, 2006: In Baghdad’s southern neighborhood of Dora, a group of gunmen went on a shooting spree killing a construction worker, trade ministry employee and the power plant workers who had been abducted from their car an hour earlier. In west Baghdad, a medic was killed as he administered vaccinations in the Amariyah district.

• April 19, 2006: Three university professors traveling to Baghdad were killed by gunmen.

• April 20, 2006: Gunmen killed two Shi’ites working in a bakery in Baghdad’s Dora district bakery in Baghdad’s Dora district. Gunmen in six pickup trucks stormed two bookstores in Baghdad, kidnapping six people.

• May 2, 2006: Alleged members of the Ministry of Interior arrested and killed Mohammed Abdul-Raheem Al-Ani, a professor at Al-Mustansiriya University, a doctoral student in the College of Islamic Sciences of Baghdad University, and a member of the Muslim Scholars Association.

• May 5, 2006: The Yarmouk hospital in Baghdad received 13 bodies, six of which were shop owners, three of them brothers, who were executed and their businesses burned.

• May 7, 2006: Two employees of the privately owned al-Nahrain television channel were kidnapped coming home from work.

• May 8, 2006: Unknown gunman kidnapped and executed pharmacist Fadhel Ezalddin Nidham then set the pharmacy in Mosul on fire.

• May 9, 2006: In a health facility near Tal Afar, armed men entered a health facility and forced medical personal to treat one of their men rather than the woman and children currently in the hospital. The gunman also destroyed equipment and attacked an ambulance driver.

• May 10, 2006: In Diyala province, a group of gunmen in a sedan forced a bus of employees of an Iraqi electrical manufacturing firm to the side of the road. The gunmen pulled 12 men off of the bus and executed them, sparing eight other women. Insurgents then planted a bomb on the bus, and when a second group arrived on the scene, the bomb exploded killing four more.

• May 12, 2006: In Baquba, a Shi’a professor, Widad Al-Shimri, and her daughter were killed.

• May 15, 2006: Near the town of Baladruz, four teachers were killed on the way to their school.
• May 15, 2005: In Mosul, gunman assassinated Dr. Adnan Abbas Al-Hashemy in the garage near his private clinic.1094

• May 16, 2006: In Baghdad, bombs damaged three shops known for selling alcohol.

• May 17, 2006: Gunmen killed three construction workers in the mixed Baghdad neighborhood of Jamiya.

• May 24, 2006: A drive-by shooting killed a college student riding a minibus and wounded three other passengers in Baghdad. The gunmen then stopped the bus and kidnapped another college student. In western Baghdad, gunmen in a speeding car shot two brothers who were selling gasoline at the side of a street in the Iskan neighborhood. Gunmen also shot dead a grocery store owner in his shop, a police officer heading to work and a taxi driver.

• May 27, 2006: In four separate shootings in the capital, gunmen killed a garden storeowner; a grocer; a taxi driver and his son; and the owner of a glass store. In Baquba, masked gunmen killed four workers and wounded another at a metalworking shop. Gunmen stopped a minibus carrying college students from Mosul, killing one of the students.

• May 31, 2006: Ali Jaafar, a sports broadcaster for the state-owned television channel, Al Iraqiya, was slain by machine-gun fire as he left his home for work.

• June 2, 2006: Gunmen killed an Egyptian ice cream vendor in Amarah. Gunmen killed Safa Alber, a Christian who worked as an engineer at the al-Hartha electric power station in Basra.

• June 4, 2006: Masked gunmen stopped two minivans carrying students north of Baghdad at a fake checkpoint, ordered the passengers off, separated Shiites from Sunni Arabs, and killed the 21 Shiites. 12 of them were students.

• June 5, 2006: Two college students were killed by gunmen in Baghdad's southern Dora district. Other reports indicated that as many as 12 students were killed and that the gunmen had posed as bus-drivers, inviting the students onto their buses.

• June 10, 2006: A Sunni Arab professor at the College of Chemistry in the University of Basra, Mr. Ahmad Abdul Wadir Abdullah, was killed.1095

• June 13, 2006: Gunmen killed Hani Aref Jassim, a professor at Baghdad University's College of Engineering, in Baghdad's Mansour neighborhood.

• June 15, 2006: Another professor, Mr. Qasim Yousif Yacoub, at the University of Basra was killed.

• June 18, 2006: At the Ministry of Interior building in Baghdad Mr. Modhaer Zayed Al-Dabagh, a professor at the Computer College of Mosul University, was also killed.

• June 21, 2006: Gunmen killed the dean of the Abdullah Bin Om Kalthoum School in Al-Zubain, near Basra. According to witnesses, the dean was killed in front of his students.

• June 22, 2006: A professor at the College of Political Sciences in Baghdad University and editor of the Al-Syada daily newspaper, Dr. Jassim Mohammad Al-Eesawi, was killed in Al-Shu’ala city in Baghdad.1096

• July 1, 2006: Sunni lawmaker Tayseer al-Mashhadani was abducted by kidnappers, along with seven of her bodyguards, at a checkpoint in a Shiite neighborhood of Baghdad.

• July 6, 2006: An investigative judge was gunned down while he was being driven through a western neighborhood. Additionally, Khalida Mohammed, a prominent doctor in the northern city of Kirkuk was shot to death as she left for work.

The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq reported in their Human Rights update for July and August that during those two months, three judges were killed, another was kidnapped, and two others survived assassination attempts. These numbers were concerning because of the acute lack of judges during a time when...
thousands of detainees remained untried. The report also states that 120 lawyers fled Iraq since January, and seven were killed in July and August.

- July 23, 2006: A car bomb exploded in front of the Appeal’s Court in Kirkuk, killing one lawyer and wounding 100 other civilians.

- July 29, 2006: Unknown assassins killed Salah Abdel-Kader, a lawyer known for working on “honor crimes” and children’s cases, in his office in Baghdad.

- September 6, 2006: A woman working in the media office of police in Baquba was shot to death on her way home from work.

- September 8, 2006: Gunmen opened fired on two employees of the Iraqi newspaper, Sabah.

- September 26, 2006: Gunmen assassinated heart surgeon Razzaq Umran Ali as he drove to work at the Ibn al-Bitar hospital in Baghdad.

- October 31, 2006: A Geology Professor, Issam al-Rawi, at the University of Baghdad was killed by two gunmen on motorcycles. He was a moderate Sunni Muslim and the dead of the science department said, “They murdered one of the few burning candles. We considered him a man for all.”

- November 3, 2006: Gunmen killed the dean of the College of Administration and Economy at the University of Baghdad. Gunmen also killed a lawyer and his two daughters in Hillah. The lawyer was advising the main Sunni charity. In another attack, masked gunmen wounded the principal and three students at a primary school in southern Baghdad.

- November 18, 2006: Insurgents killed one guard and wounded another as they attacked the residence of Iraq’s Science and Technology minister in eastern Baghdad’s Zayouna district.

- December 4, 2006: Gunmen shot Nabil al-Dulaimi, a journalist working for the local Dijla radio station, in al-Washash district in northwestern Baghdad.

- December 6, 2006: Gunmen seriously wounded a university professor in Mosul.

- December 9, 2006: Gunmen kidnapped well-known television director Hussein Rasheed al-Tikriti on a road near Mishada north of Baghdad, his nephew said.

- December 20, 2006: A suicide car bomber rammed his vehicle into a police checkpoint near Baghdad University in the southwestern Jadriya district, killing 11 people and wounding 31, including some students.

**Kidnap Iraqi professionals for ransom and extort local businesses:** Insurgents, local gangs and militias often turned to intimidation and extortion of doctors and other well-paid professionals in order to raise funds. In return they, often would offer “protection.” This risked creating a “brain drain” in which some of the most qualified and highly trained professionals began leaving Iraq for neighboring countries.

By the end of March 2006, Iraqi police said that as many as 30 people are reported kidnapped every day. It is likely that many kidnappings go unrecorded however, as families prefer to pay the ransom rather than involve the police who may be involved in the abduction. Often these individuals are kidnapped for ransoms between $20,000 and $30,000.

In one instance, a British-trained surgeon received a phone call at his practice from the “Mujahideen” who asked for “a donation to help our cause.” They made a suggestion of 10,000 dollars in exchange for protection. The doctor, given two days to collect the money, fled to Jordan when he received a text message threatening his life.

In another case, men claiming to be from an anti-terrorist squad walked into a medical supply store and removed 40,000 dollars from the safe. They proceeded to kidnap the owner’s son and detained him until the family paid 40,000 dollars, only a fraction of the 250,000 dollars they originally demanded.
A Shi’ite resident and owner of a mini-market in Mosul said that while he had not received any threats, two of his friends were abducted and later killed because the family could not afford to pay the ransom.\footnote{1103}

A string of these kidnappings and assaults happened in March:\footnote{1104}

- March 8, 2006: 50 employees are abducted from a Baghdad security company.
- March 27, 2006: Gunmen in military uniforms kidnapped 16 people from an Iraqi export company in central Baghdad.
- March 28, 2006: In three separate incidents, gunmen, many in military uniforms wearing masks, kidnapped 24 people from two electronics stores and a currency exchange stealing thousands of dollars in the process.
- March 29, 2006: Gunmen identifying themselves as MOI police entered the offices of a construction firm and lined up the employees, killing 8. They abducted the manager and fled the scene.

In one day in March, 21 people were abducted in four separate incidents. 15 men dressed as members of the Iraqi Army dragged six people out of a money exchange shop and stole almost 60,000 dollars. In two other similar events, men wearing MOI uniforms kidnapped individuals from two electronics shops.\footnote{1105}

A joint U.S.-Iraqi raid in late March, allegedly on a Shi’ite mosque, resulted in the rescue of one Iraqi hostage who had been threatened with torture and death by militiamen if his family did not pay 20,000.\footnote{1106}

The identity of the attackers is almost impossible to distinguish. Some claimed to be Mujahideen insurgents, others Iraqi security forces. The MOI denied widespread claims that its soldiers had been involved in these attacks and instead suggested that the perpetrators were insurgents or foreign terrorists who had obtained MOI and army uniforms.

- **Attack, kidnap and kill high-ranking members of the Iraqi Security Forces and their families:** This was done to not only to erode efforts to build an ISF, but also discourage and frighten potential recruits, and to undermine Iraqi confidence in the government’s ability to provide security.


Periods of relative calm could be followed by sudden escalations. For example, in one twenty-four hour period in late September 2005, insurgents assassinated Colonel Fadil Mahmud Muhammad, the head of Diyala’s Police Command; killed four workers from the Ministry of Displacement and Migration in Baghdad; and carried out other assassinations in Baquba, Ramadi, Latifiyah and Mosul.\footnote{1107}

  - September 22, 2005: Gunmen assassinate Col. Fadil Mahmud Muhammad, head of Diyala’s Police Command and his driver.
  - September 27, 2005: In Kirkuk, gunmen assassinated Maj. Fakhir Hussein, a counterterrorism police officer and wounded another officer.
  - September 29, 2005: In western Baghdad, gunmen killed four policemen, including two high-ranking police officers from Balad.


• December 26, 2005: In Diyala province, gunmen abducted Sunni police colonel.

• January 15, 2006: Col. Hussein Shiaa, commander of the 2nd Battalion of the Iraqi Army's 4th Brigade, and his brother were abducted when they were leaving their base in Mahmoudiya.

• January 17, 2006: The bodies of Col. Hussein Shiaa, commander of the 2nd Battalion of the Iraqi Army’s 4th Brigade and his brother were found dead in western Baghdad's dangerous al-Baiyaa district. A police lieutenant was gunned down in his car while driving through al-Baiyaa.

• January 21, 2006: An Iraqi army major, his son and his bodyguard were killed in a drive-by shooting Saturday as they headed to work, a second son was wounded in the attack near Qadisiyah. Police also found the bullet-riddled bodies of Iraqi commando officer Ali Hussein in an open field.

• January 25, 2006: A policeman was also gunned down in Baghdad's Sadr City.

• February 13, 2006: Gunmen shot dead an Iraqi policeman protecting electricity-generating facilities near a hospital in eastern Baghdad's Sadr City.

• February 14, 2006: Insurgents also shot dead an Iraqi Army major and his son in Taji.

• February 18, 2006: A senior Baghdad police official escaped assassination when a bomb exploded near his convoy in the Karradah district. Brig. Abdul-Karim Maryoush was unharmed, but two police escorts died.

• February 19, 2006: A policeman, an Iraqi Army soldier and a paramilitary officer were killed by gunmen in three shootings.

• March 6, 2006: The car of General Dulami, a Sunni who headed the Sixth Iraqi Army Division and had worked closely with American commanders, came under a barrage of gunfire on a highway in western Baghdad. Four bullets slammed into General Dulaimi’s car, and one of them pierced the armor and hit the general in the head.

• March 19, 2006: In the northern region of Kirkuk, two Iraqi soldiers were found stabbed to death two days after they were reported kidnapped.

• April 11, 2006: The headless body of a policeman was found on a river shore in Kut.

• April 13, 2006: In Mosul, gunmen killed a policeman who was driving his sons to school. One of the sons was killed and the other wounded.

• April 15, 2006: Lt. Col. Ali Muhammad Abdul Latif, the chief of Basra’s police force was killed by gunmen and his driver was wounded.

• April 26, 2006: In Baghdad, an army officer whose home was stormed by gunmen.

• May 6, 2006: A suicide bomber, dressed in an Iraqi uniform, blew himself up inside an Iraqi military base in Tikrit, killing three senior Iraqi army officers.

• May 7, 2006: In Kirkuk, gunmen kidnapped Col. Sherzad Abdullah, an Iraqi army officer as he left for work.

• May 18, 2006: In Basra, the police chief, Gen. Hassan Swadi, narrowly escaped an assassination attempt when his convoy hit a roadside bomb.

• May 27, 2006: Baquba saw at least three attacks on police targets, including an ambush that killed the city’s deputy police chief and four other officers.

• June 11, 2006:Gunmen assassinated Obaid Ahmed Abdullah, a former Iraqi army brigadier

• June 20, 2006: Gunmen assassinated commander of the Ayan Al Tamr Police Station in western Karbala. The officer and three escorts were ambushed and killed in an unidentified area. The Iraqi Interior Ministry announced that Brigadier General Khudayir Abdallah Abbas, assistant commander of the Al-Fallujah Police was also killed when leaving his house in the city.

• September 12, 2006: In Mosul, gunmen killed police Brigadier Ziad Ramzi.

• September 17, 2006: In southern Basra, police found the body of Lt. Col. Fawzi Abdul Karim al-Mousawi, chief of the city’s anti-terrorism department. Al-Mousawi was kidnapped in front of his house by a group of armed men using two cars. He had been handcuffed and shot seven times.

• October 2, 2006: Gunmen shot dead Colonel Faris Khalil of Iraqi intelligence as he was driving along a Baghdad highway in civilian clothes.

• October 10, 2006: Two brothers of a Baghdad police brigadier were found shot dead in different locations.

• October 13, 2006: A bomb planted inside a police station killed Colonel Salam al-Mamoury, commander of the anti-insurgent Scorpion police force, and five other people. The blast wounded 12 others and punched a hole in the building’s ceiling in central Hilla.

• November 12, 2006: A roadside bomb wounded police colonel Abbas al-Dulaimi, head of the US-Iraqi Joint Coordination Centre in Tikrit.

• November 13, 2006: Gunmen killed Kamil Salih, a traffic police brigadier, in north Baghdad.

• November 18, 2006: Gunmen killed Lieutenant Colonel Mohammed Ganim from the Facility Protection Services along with his driver in a drive-by shooting in the Mosul.

• November 24, 2006: A roadside bomb killed two guards and wounded three when it targeted the convoy of Brigadier-General Faridoun Talabani, who was lightly wounded, police said.

• December 2, 2006: Gunmen killed police Captain Hayder Mousa in the district of New Baghdad.

• December 6, 2006: Gunmen attacked a police brigadier, wounding him and killing his driver in a drive-by shooting in al-Mansour district in west-central Baghdad.

• December 7, 2006: Gunmen killed Basil Abdullah, the deputy chief of al-Sadoun police station, along with two of his guards near al- Shaab National Stadium in east-central Baghdad.

• December 10, 2006: Gunmen killed army Colonel Yaarub Khazaal, a security guard for Ahmed Chalabi, head of the deBaathification committee, in the western Yarmouk district of Baghdad.

• December 18, 2006: Gunmen kidnapped police Captain Nihad Khalid, head of emergency police in Samarra, after storming his house, police said.

• December 20, 2006: Gunmen killed police Lieutenant Colonel Ahmed Saleh in Tikrit.

• December 25, 2006: Gunmen killed a police lieutenant colonel and wounded three other policemen in a drive-by shooting in the town of Mahaweel

• December 28, 2006: Gunmen killed a police captain and wounded two other policemen in a drive-by shooting in Baquba.

• January 6, 2007: The chief of Baghdad police, Major General Ali Yasser, survived a car bomb attack on his motorcade in Baghdad, police sources said.
• **Attack Iraqi police and army recruits:** This tactic was intended to discourage and scare potential recruits. It often employed the tactics of suicide bombers targeting those waiting in line at recruiting stations or attacked new recruits at training facilities. Gunmen and insurgents also abducted potential, or rejected recruits, their bodies later turning up executed and dumped throughout Iraq. Not only did these attacks have an important psychological value, but also the fact that they were civilians, often standing grouped together undefended, provided insurgents with a “soft” and easy target.

- February 10, 2004: A car bomb exploded outside a police station in Iskandariya, killing at least 55 and wounding up to 65. Many of the victims were applicants lined up outside.

- February 11, 2004: A suicide bomber rammed a car packed with explosives into a crowd of Iraqi Army recruits in central Baghdad, killing at least 47 and wounding at least 50 others.

- June 17, 2004: Suicide car bombs explode outside a military recruitment center and a city council building in Baghdad, killing at least 41 and wounding at least 142.

- September 14, 2004: A car bomb kills 47 outside Army headquarters in Baghdad, where hundreds of recruits were lined up.

- October 23, 2004: In the single deadliest insurgent ambush, guerrillas dressed as police officers execute 49 newly trained Iraqi soldiers on a remote road in eastern Iraq. The unarmed soldiers stopped at a fake checkpoint while returning home after completing training with US forces.

- February 8, 2005: a suicide bomb struck Baghdad’s National Guard volunteer center, killing at least 20 potential recruits.

- February 28, 2005: A suicide car bomber plows into a crowd of Iraqi police and army recruits in Hillah, killing 127 in the deadliest single bombing since the start of the war.

- April 22, 2005: 19 executed Iraqi soldiers’ bodies were found dumped near the oil refinery town of Beiji, north of Baghdad.

- May 30, 2005: Two suicide bombers strapped with explosives blew themselves up in a crowd of ex-policemen protesting outside of Baghdad, killing 27 in one of the deadliest attacks in a month of escalating violence. More than 100 people were wounded.

- June 8, 2005: Gunmen have kidnapped 22 Iraqi soldiers shortly after they left their base near Qaim on route to Rawa.

- July 10, 2005: A suicide bomber blew himself up among a crowd of recruits at the army recruiting center at Muthana airfield in Baghdad killing 25 and wounding 50.

- July 20, 2005: A suicide attack at the recruiting center near the Muthana airport in Baghdad kills 10, including a Sunni member of the constitutional drafting committee and wounds more than 20.

- July 29, 2005: A suicide bicycle bomber struck a busy carrying Iraqi Army trainees, killing two and wounding two others, outside of Balad.

- April 7, 2005: A suicide car bomb struck a police recruitment center in Tikrit killing five and wounding more than a dozen.

- September 28, 2005: A female suicide bomber disguised as a man kills seven and injures 35 at a police recruitment center in Tal Afar.

- October 12, 2005: A suicide car bomber struck a crowd of Iraqi military recruits in Tal Afar, killing at least 30 and wounding 35.

- November 27, 2005: The bodies of three Iraqi soldiers were found near the city’s largest Shiite slum, Habibiya.
• December 6, 2005: Two suicide bombers blew themselves up at Baghdad’s police academy, killing at least 43 people and wounding more than 70.

• January 2, 2006: Seven police recruits were killed and 13 wounded by a roadside bomb outside Baquba.

• January 5, 2006: A suicide bomber targeting a police recruitment center in Ramadi killed more than 50 and wounded as many as 60 others.

• January 22, 2006: The bodies of the 23 men were found partially buried near Dujail, about 50 miles north of Baghdad. They had been abducted Wednesday while traveling from Baghdad to their homes in Samarra after failing to be accepted at a police recruit center.

• January 23, 2006: The bodies of eight Sunni Arabs were found in a field north of Baghdad five days after they were seized on their way home by bus after being rejected for admission to the police academy in the capital.

• February 25, 2006: The bodies of 14 slain police commandos were found near their three burned vehicles near a Sunni mosque in southwestern Baghdad.

• March 27, 2006: A suicide bombing at an Army recruiting center in Mosul killed 40 and wounded 30.

• April 24, 2006: The bodies of 15 police recruits were found in the backs of trucks in Abu Ghraib. There were also reports that 17 more had been found in Ramadi.

• May 3, 2006: A suicide bomber blew himself while in line with police recruits in Fallujah, killing 15 and wounding 30.

• May 9, 2006: Four bodies wearing military uniforms were found beheaded in Suwayra, south of Baghdad. Other sources reported 11 bodies were found at the site, including a 10-year-old-boy.

• September 1, 2006: In the Doura district a roadside bomb killed three police recruits.

• September 11, 2006: Sixteen Iraqi army recruits were killed on a bus in Baghdad at the al-Muthana recruiting center and an additional seven were wounded.

• September 18, 2006: In Ramadi, the capital of Anbar province, a suicide bar bombing slammed into a recruiting center, killing 13 and wounding ten others. The insurgent group, al-Qa’ida in Iraq, took responsibility for the attack.

• October 4, 2006: Several mortar rounds landed at an army recruitment centre killing four recruits and wounding eight others in Mosul.

• October 21, 2006: A bomb blast and an ambush by gunmen on a convoy of buses near Baquba killed 13 police recruits and several more recruits were kidnapped. Another 25 recruits were wounded.

• October 29, 2006: Gunmen ambushed a minibus carrying police translators, trainers and cleaning workers from a police academy to Basra, killing 17 people.

• November 12, 2006: A suicide bomber walked into a police-recruiting centre in Baghdad and blew himself up, killing 35 people and wounding 58.

• December 21, 2006: A suicide bomber killed 15 police officers and recruits in central Baghdad. The attacker triggered his bomb amid a crowd of cadets arriving near the Iraqi police academy off Palestine Street in the heart of Baghdad, interior ministry operations chief Brigadier General Abdul Karim Khalaf said. Three police officers and 12 recruits were killed and 15 more people wounded, the US military said, citing an Iraqi police report.

• Attack those involved in the trial of Saddam Hussein and other Ba’ath leaders: In what appeared to be a new twist in political assassinations, gunmen began to target those involved in the trial of former regime officials like Saddam Hussein. On October 20, one day after the start of the trial in Baghdad, gunmen
assassinated Saadon al-Janabi. Al-Janabi had been defending Awad al-Bandar, a former Ba’ath Party official. Two weeks later, on November 8, gunmen killed Adel al-Zubeidi, the lawyer for former Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan. Al-Zubeidi was riding in his car in the Sunni neighborhood of Adil in western Baghdad when insurgents sprayed the car with bullets, injuring another attorney, Thamir al-Khuzaie in the process.

In response to the attacks, more than 1,100 Iraqi lawyers withdrew from Saddam Hussein’s defense team on November 12. The attorneys had earlier said they would not return to court until security was stepped up and reaffirmed their intention not to return to court on November 28 when the trial was scheduled to resume. In the statement they released, the attorneys said they withdrew because “there was no response from the Iraqi government, US forces and international organizations to our demands for providing protection to the lawyers and their families.”

Many of the lawyers rejected the Interior Ministry’s offer to supply them with bodyguards, claiming the Shi’ite-led police and security forces were behind many of the political assassinations.

Iraqi police arrested eight Sunni Arabs in Kirkuk on November 26, two days before Saddam’s trial was scheduled to resume in Baghdad. The men were accused of plotting to assassinate Raed Juhi, one of the judges who prepared the case against Saddam. When told of the threat on his life, Juhi said: “As an Iraqi citizen and a judge, I am vulnerable to assassination attempts…If I thought about this danger, then I would not be able to perform my job…I will practice my profession in a way that serves my country and satisfies my conscience.”

In a February 2006 report to Congress, the Department of Defense highlighted the threats to judges in general and the security measures taken by the Coalition to attempt and protect them: “Intimidation of judges by insurgents severely affects the rule of law in Iraq. Twenty-nine secure housing units inside the protected International Zone have recently been made available to judges living in the Baghdad area. Eight CCCI (The Central Criminal Court of Iraq) judges have access to up-armored vehicles, and 33 CCI judges have trained private security details at their constant disposal.”

In spite of the attempts to protect individuals involved in the trial, one of Hussein’s main lawyers, Khamis Al-Obeidi was shot to death on June 21, 2006, after men wearing police uniforms abducted him from his Baghdad home. His body was found on a street near Sadr city. Al-Obeidi was the third member of Hussein’s defense team to be killed since the former leader’s trial began.

On September 29, 2006 gunmen assassinated relatives of the judge adjudicating Hussein’s trial, Mohammad al-Oreibi al-Khalifa. The judge’s brother in law was killed and his son was wounded in Ghazaliyah, where much sectarian violence had occurred in previous months. Mr. Oreibi planned to continue as the judge of that trial, which was hearing witnesses on charges of genocide against the Kurdish community in 1988.

On December 31, 2006, Saddam Hussein was executed for crimes against humanity involving the 1982 killing of close to 150 Shi’ites. His trial for offensive during the Kurdish campaign was underway at the time of his execution.

- “Horror” attacks, atrocities, and alienation: Whether or not the tactics were initially deliberate, insurgents in Iraq found that atrocities like desecrating corpses and beheadings are effective political and psychological weapons for those Islamist extremists whose goal is to divide the West from the Islamic world, and create an unbridgeable “clash of civilizations.”

Experts have long pointed out that one of the key differences between Islamist extremist terrorism and previous forms of terrorism is that they are not seeking to negotiate with those they terrorize, but rather to create conditions that can drive the West out of the Middle East, undermine secular and moderate regimes in the Arab and Islamic worlds, and establish the conditions under which they can create “Islamic” states according to their own ideas of “Puritanism.”

This is why it serves the purposes of Islamist extremists, as well as some of the more focused opponents of the US and the West, to create mass casualties and carry out major strikes, or carry out executions and beheadings, even if the result is to provoke hostility and anger. The goal of Bin Laden and those like him is not to persuade the US or the West, it is rather to so alienate them from the Islamic and Arab world that the
forces of secularism in the region will be sharply undermined, and Western influence can be controlled or eliminated. The goal of most Iraqi insurgents is narrower – drive the US and its allies out of Iraq – but involves many of the same methods.

Seen in this context, the more horrifying the attack, the better. Simple casualties do not receive the same media attention. They are a reality of war. Killing (or sometimes releasing) innocent hostages does grab the attention of the world media. Large bombs in crowds do the same, as does picking targets whose innocence or media impact grabs headlines. Desecrating corpses, beheading people, and similar acts of violence get even more media attention – at least for a while.

Such actions also breed anger and alienation in the US and the West and provoke excessive political and media reactions, more stringent security measures, violent responses, and all of the other actions that help instigate a “clash of civilizations.” The US and the West are often provoked into playing into the hands of such attackers.

At the same time, any attack or incident that garners massive media coverage and political reactions appears to be a “victory” to those who support Islamist extremism or those who are truly angry at the US – even though the actual body count is often low, and victory does not mean creating stronger forces or winning political control. Each such incident can be used to damage the US and Western view of the Arab and Islamic worlds.

Two incidents in particular, both involving the murder and mutilation of US contractors, deserve special mention. On March 31, 2004, insurgents in Fallujah attacked two SUVs carrying four civilian contractors charged with providing security for food convoys in the area. The insurgents attacked the vehicles with rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire before pulling the bodies from the burning vehicles and dragging them through the street. Several of the bodies were mutilated and two were strung up on a nearby bridge while local crowds chanted, “Fallujah is the graveyard of Americans.” Footage of the burned and mutilated corpses was broadcast around the world.1114

The brutality of the attack drew comparisons to a similar incident in Mogadishu a decade earlier when American soldiers were dragged through the streets by angry mobs.1115 Experts like John Pike of GlobalSecurity.org said the comparison to the 1993 attack was spot-on and suggested the Mogadishu attack probably served as an inspiration for the Fallujah attack: “They knew how to stage that. They are trying to frighten Americans. They want to frighten us out of Iraq…It was premeditated, planned, skillfully staged terrorism. They know the degree of dread it will inflict in American family members.”1116 In July, after a three-week siege of Fallujah by US Marines, a militant group calling itself the Islamic Army in Iraq claimed responsibility for the attack.1117

A similar incident occurred on September 20, 2005, when insurgents attacked a convoy of US contractors north of Baghdad. The convoy, which included US military guards, came under attack after making a wrong turn in the largely Sunni city of Duluiyah, 45 miles north of Baghdad. Insurgents opened gunfire on the convoy, killing four and wounding two.1118 The British newspaper The Daily Telegraph broke the story more than a month later, with a grisly account of the attack. The paper described how the insurgents dragged two contractors from their truck and forced them to kneel, “[k]illing one of the men with a rifle round fired into the back of his head, they doused the other with petrol and set him alight. Barefoot children, yelping in delight, piled straw on the screaming man’s body to stoke the flames.” Afterwards, a crowd dragged the corpses through the street, chanting anti-US slogans.1119 The military did not confirm the attack (in fact, no mention of it seems to have appeared before the Telegraph account,) until October 22, and said only it was investigating the incident.

In 2005, insurgents began adopting a new “horror” tactic, targeting funeral processions. These attacks included:1120

- March 10, 2005: A suicide bomber struck a Shi’ite mosque during a funeral in Mosul.
- March 12, 2005: Gunmen killed three Iraqi police officers as they drive to a colleague’s funeral in Mosul.
- May 1, 2005: A car bomb detonated next to a tent crowded with mourners for the funeral of a Kurdish official in Tal Afar, killing 25 people and wounding more than 50.
July 2, 2005: A bomb went off in a local market in Mahmudiya, south of Baghdad. The attack, which killed two and wounded 10, occurred minutes after the funeral procession of Sheik Kamaleddin passed by.

October 5, 2005: A bomb exploded outside the Shi’ite Husseiniyat Ibn al-Nama mosque in Hillah, killing 25 and wounding 87. Among the victims were mourners attending a funeral service for a local restaurant owner killed by insurgents two days earlier.

November 19, 2005: A suicide bomber killed at least 36 people and wounded 50 more in a Shi’ite funeral procession north of Baghdad.

January 4, 2006: A suicide bomber struck a Shi’ite funeral east of Baquba, killing 37 people and wounding 45 others.

These attacks, the majority of which targeted Shi’ites, received a lot of media attention. After the January 2006 bombing, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan released a statement saying he was “appalled” by the suicide bombing. Annan also condemned the crime, saying it targeted innocent civilians “in total disrespect for human life and dignity.” The Secretary-General urged all parties to come together and refrain from violence that could undermine the country’s recent democratic progress.1121

“Body dumps:” Body dumps became a variation of “horror” attacks and atrocities. It has become increasingly difficult to determine who is responsible for body dumps, and there are clear indications that the number of Shi’ites killing Sunnis increased steadily in 2005, just as Sunni insurgents increased their killings of Shi’ites. It is clear, however, the bodies of Iraqi forces, pro-government Iraqis, and other Iraqis that have no links to Shi’ite attacks have been dumped in rivers, soccer stadiums, and other public places where they were found without any clear picture as to who had killed them or why. In mid March 2005, for example, some 80 bodies were found in four dumps in Iraq, many of who were police officers and soldiers.1122 Other notable discoveries in late 2005 included:1123

April 20, 2005: 100 bodies were retrieved from the Tigris River, near the town of Madain.

April 22, 2005: The bodies of 19 Iraqi soldiers were found near Beiji.

May 15, 2005: The bodies of 38 men shot execution-style were discovered at an abandoned chicken farm, west of Baghdad.

May 28, 2005: The mutilated bodies of 10 Iraqi Shi’ite Muslim pilgrims were founding the desert near the town of Qaim.

June 10, 2005: The bodies of 16 people were discovered in western Iraq.

June 12, 2005: Police discover 28 bodies in and around Baghdad.

August 14, 2005: Captured insurgents lead Iraqi police to a grave containing 30 bodies in southern Baghdad.


September 5, 2005: The bodies of three local politicians were found in Tal Afar.

September 8, 2005: Police discover 14 bodies near Mahmoudiyah.

September 9, 2005: The bodies of 10 decapitated Iraqis were found.

September 12, 2005: Police in Baghdad discover the bodies of 10 Iraqi men.

September 17, 2005: A total of 11 bodies, handcuffed and blindfolded, were found around the country.

September 18, 2005: 20 bodies were pulled from the Tigris River, north of Baghdad.
• September 22, 2005: The bodies of 10 Iraqis were discovered in Mosul.
• September 28, 2005: The bodies of seven Sunni men from Hurriya were found in Shula.
• October 3, 2005: Three bodies were found in Baghdad.
• October 7, 2005: The bodies of 22 executed Sunnis are discovered in Badra, near the border with Iran.
• October 11, 2005: A US Army patrol in Tikrit discovers three bodies with multiple gunshot wounds.
• October 26, 2005: The bodies of nine Iraqi border guards are found in Karbala.
• October 27, 2005: The bodies of 17 Sunnis are found in Al-Nasiriyah Governorate.
• October 30, 2005: Iraqi police discover 14 bodies near Tal Afar. The victims appeared to have been killed between one and three months ago.
• November 10, 2005: Iraqi soldiers discover the bodies of 27 executed civilians near the border with Iran.
• November 14, 2005: Four bodies are discovered in northern Baghdad.
• November 27, 2005: The bodies of three Iraqi soldiers were discovered in the Baghdad slum of Habibya.
• December 27, 2005: Iraqi authorities discovered the remains of 31 people in a mass grave in Karbala. The remains were believed to be from the 1991 Gulf War.
• December 31, 2005: The bodies of five Iraqis were found in southern Baghdad. Four bodies had been dumped in a river, and the fifth, half-tortured, was found in an orchard.

As the list shows, most of the body dumps have been found in the greater Baghdad area. Some 300 mass graves have been discovered since the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime in March 2003.\textsuperscript{1124} According to the Associated Press, at least 204 of the 566 bodies that have been found since the interim government was formed on April 28 were discovered in Baghdad. Although the identities of most victims are unknown, the Associated Press has identified 116 Sunnis, 43 Shi’ites and one Kurd among the victims.\textsuperscript{1125} The frequency of these discoveries appeared to increase in the run-up to the October election. Body dumps continued in 2006. Political leaders, former Ba’ath Party members and police recruits were common victims. On January 2, 2006, officials discovered eight unidentified bodies inside a water purification plant in Rustimiyah, south of Baghdad.\textsuperscript{1126} Four days later, on January 6, Iraqi police stumbled upon 10 bodies in Baghdad.\textsuperscript{1127}

• January 17, 2006: The bodies of Col. Hussein Shi’ite, commander of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Battalion of the Iraqi Army’s 4\textsuperscript{th} Brigade and his brother were found bound and shot in the head in western Baghdad’s dangerous al-Baiya district. They were abducted the previous Sunday in Mahmoudiya.
• January 18, 2006: Seven Shi’ites were found murdered in this fashion in Wahdah. 25 bodies were discovered in Nibaei.
• January 20, 2006: Police said they had found seven additional bodies in Dujaal.
• January 21, 2006: Iraqi authorities found the bullet-riddled bodies of Iraqi commando officer Ali Hussein in an open field and former Ba’ath Party member Abdun Hamid in a playground near Karbala.
• January 22, 2006: The bodies of the 23 men were found partially buried near Dujaal, about 50 miles north of Baghdad. They had been abducted Wednesday while traveling from Baghdad to their homes in Samarra after failing to be accepted at a police recruit center. In the central city of Mashru, police found the bodies of two blindfolded men who had been shot in the head and chest. The bodies of prominent Sunni Arab tribal leader, Sayid Ibrahim Ali, 75, and his 28-year-old son, Ayad, were found in a field near Hawija, 150 miles north of Baghdad.
• January 23, 2006: The bodies of eight Sunni Arabs were found in a field north of Baghdad five days after they were seized on their way home by bus after being rejected for admission to the police academy.

• January 26, 2006: Police found four bound and blindfolded bodies riddled with bullet holes in Mahmoudiya, about 20 miles south of Baghdad.

• January 28, 2006: Police found the buried bodies of six laborers who had been bound, gagged and shot in the head south of the southern city of Karbala.

• January 31, 2006: In Baghdad, police found the bodies of 11 handcuffed, blindfolded men inside a truck near the Ghazaliyah district of western Baghdad. Three other bodies were found in Baghdad's Rustamiyah area.

• February 4, 2006: The bullet-riddled bodies of 14 Sunni Arab men purportedly seized by police a week ago were found dumped in Baghdad.

• February 16, 2006: The bodies of 12 men were found dead, shot execution style in the head.

After the February 22 attack on a sacred Shi’ite shrine, the wave of sectarian killings that followed marked an increase in both the frequency of body dumps, and the numbers of bodies discovered in each instance. These often included Iraqi’s who were not members of the police, military or security forces, but rather civilian Shi’ites or Sunnis. It became increasingly clear in 2006 that the majority of bodies dumped in Baghdad and other urban areas were the work of Shi’ite militias. Most showed signs of torture and were killed execution style. By the end of 2006 the US and Iraq said sectarian executions were the number one killer of Iraqis. The list of body dumps underestimates the numbers found on a daily basis. As the sectarian violence spread out from Baghdad, it became impossible to count those found dead in more rural areas and it is likely that many bodies were never turned into morgues or hospitals.

• February 23, 2006: At least 47 bodies were found scattered across Iraq late Wednesday and early Thursday, many of them shot execution-style and dumped in Shi’ite-dominated parts of the capital. The individuals, both Shi’ites and Sunnis, were forced from their vehicles on the way to a protest and shot.

• February 24, 2006: Police found at least 27 bodies in Baghdad and other cities and towns.

• February 25, 2006: 11 bodies were discovered in various locations across Baghdad.

• February 28, 2006: Authorities in Baquba this morning discovered nine bodies, each shot in the head.

The number of body dumps increased in March. By the end of the month, over 385 people were assassinated. The total, if including the last six days in February, was at least 486.128

• March 7, 2006: Police said they found the handcuffed bodies of 18 men in the back of a cargo truck abandoned on a roadside in Baghdad’s Amariya district, a Sunni Arab neighborhood. Another 18 bodies were washed up into a water treatment facility.

• March 8, 2006: Iraqi police found the bodies of four handcuffed and hanged men in an open field in east Baghdad. Another body, shot in the head, was found near a shop in an eastern suburb.

• March 11, 2006: Authorities discovered nine bodies around the capital, each handcuffed and with bullet wounds to the head.

• March 14, 2006: Police found a 6-by-8-yard hole in an empty field. It contained at least 27 dead men most of them in their underwear in Kamaliliah, a mostly Shi’ite east Baghdad suburb. An abandoned minibus containing 15 bodies was found on the main road between two mostly Sunni neighborhoods in west Baghdad. At least 40 more bodies were discovered in various parts of Baghdad, including both Sunni and Shi’ite neighborhoods. By the following day it was reported that 87 bodies were found in the past 24 hours.

• March 16, 2006: At least 25 bodies were found shot execution style across the capital.
• March 17, 2006: Police in a Shiite area of east Baghdad found the bodies of four Sunni men who had been seized from a taxi by masked gunmen the day before in western Baghdad.

• March 18, 2006: In Baghdad a dozen bodies were found.

• March 19, 2006: The bodies of 17 men tortured or shot to death were found in Baghdad, 11 of them flushed by city sewers into the tanks of water-purification plants.

• March 20, 2006: Police found the bodies of at least 15 people including a 13-year-old girl dumped around Baghdad.

• March 22, 2006: Police discovered eight more blindfolded corpses in west Baghdad, some of them showing signs of torture. In Suwera, four more corpses were found on the bank of the Tigris River.

• March 23, 2006: 3 bodies were found in Baghdad and 8 in Fallujah.

• March 24, 2006: 13 executed bodies were discovered in Binok, Kasmiyah and Sadr City neighborhoods.

• March 25, 2006: two more bodies were found in the capital, shot in the head with their hands and feet bound.

• March 26, 2006: 10 bodies were found blindfolded, bound and shot in Baghdad, and 30 decapitated corpses were found in Baquba.

• March 27, 2006: 12 bodies were found in southwestern Baghdad. 9 bodies were found in west Baghdad handcuffed, blindfolded and with ropes around their necks.

• March 28, 2006: 17 bodies were discovered in Baghdad, all handcuffed and shot in the head.

• March 30, 2006: In Ramadi, three workers from a local hospital were found blindfolded and shot. Al-Qa'ida in Iraq claimed responsibility for the deaths and left a not on the bodies claiming that the men were homosexuals.

• March 31, 2006: Police found five bodies scattered across the city. Three of those were found in Sadr City with signs of torture. 24 bodies of young men handcuffed and showing signs of torture were found in Amiriyah.

• April 2, 2006: Nearly 40 bodies were found in several neighborhoods surrounding Baghdad.

• April 4, 2006: 4 bodies were discovered, executed, in Baghdad.

• April 6, 2006: In Kirkuk, police discovered a headless body they believe belonged to a Kurdish man kidnapped the previous night. 4 bodies were found handcuffed and blindfolded, in Baghdad's southern Dora district.

• April 8, 2006: The bodies of 11 victims of killings were discovered around the country. Seven were found in three Baghdad neighborhoods. The other four, all Iraqi contractors employed on an American military base near Tikrit, were found in the district of Hamreen.

• April 11, 2006: Five corpses were dumped in Musayyib, south of Baghdad, and the body of a woman with an Iranian passport was found in a gutter in the city of Baquba. At least 17 additional bodies, most of them handcuffed and with multiple gun wounds, were found in Baghdad. The headless body of a policeman was found on a river shore in Kut.

• April 12, 2006: The bodies of 11 people were found shot and beheaded in and around Baghdad.

• April 16, 2006: Policemen found three bodies in the Tigris River, all shot in the head.

• April 17, 2006: Police found 12 bodies in three different areas of Baghdad, all shot in the head.
• April 22, 2006: Police said they discovered the bodies of 12 people, one decapitated, and the others bearing signs of torture.

• April 23, 2006: Authorities recovered the bodies of two men, killed execution-style and dumped near a hospital in Baghdad's Sadr City. Also in the capital, the bound and blindfolded bodies of six men were found stuffed inside the trunks of two cars. All showed signs of torture.

• April 26, 2006: The bodies of five Iraqis who had been kidnapped and killed were found in Baghdad, and six bodies were discovered in Karbala. All the Karbala victims had been shot in the right eye.

• April 29, 2006: 10 bodies were discovered in Baghdad in three different neighborhoods. All had bullet holes and signs of torture.

• May 2, 2006: 4 bodies were found in Baghdad that had been handcuffed and shot in the head.

• May 3, 2006: 37 bodies were found showing signs of torture in Baghdad.

• May 7, 2006: The Interior Ministry found 51 bodies in the capital; bound, blindfolded and shot.

• May 16, 2006: The bodies of 9 Iraqis were found in Baghdad and Karbala.

• May 19, 2006: In Mussayib, 15 bodies were found with bullet holes and showing signs of torture.

• May 23, 2006: In Dayera, police found seven bodies that had been shot in the head. Another body, also shot in the head, was found in the Iskan neighborhood of western Baghdad.

• May 30, 2006: Police also found the bodies of three blindfolded and handcuffed men who had been tortured and shot in the head in Baghdad.

• May 31, 2006: 42 bodies were found in separate locations in Baghdad, all bound and shot and most with signs of torture.

• June 3, 2006: In Baghdad, at least 22 bodies were discovered that had been burned, blindfolded, handcuffed, thrown into a river or dumped near a pediatric hospital.

• June 4, 2006: In Basra, Iraqi police who shot dead nine people also detained six in an early morning raid at al-Arab Sunni mosque.

• June 10, 2006: 7 bodies were found in the river Milih in the Wasit Governorate. The victims showed signs of torture.

• June 13, 2006: 16 bodies were discovered shot dead and showing signs of torture in Baghdad.

• June 18, 2006: Iraqi police found 17 bodies in and around Baghdad, including those of four women and a teenager who were handcuffed and shot in the head.

• June 23, 2006: Police found the bodies of five men who appeared to be victims of the mass abduction that took place on June 21 at a plant in Taji. The victims, who were apparently tortured, were found with hands and legs tied, floating in a canal in northern Baghdad.

• July 1, 2006: Police found six bodies dumped in a construction site in southern Baghdad.

• July 4, 2006: Police found the bodies of six construction workers in Baghdad—four were shot in the head and their bodies were left near a Sunni mosque, and the other two bodies were left in different locations.

• July 6, 2006: Iraqi officials reported the discovery of 36 bodies in outlying neighborhoods of the capital. The victims were bound and blindfolded, and showed signs of torture. They were shot in a way that is commonly attributed to Shiite death squads.

• September 4, 2006: In a twelve hour time period Iraqi police found forty bodies in and around the capital. All of the bodies showed signs of torture and many were handcuffed or blindfolded.
• September 5, 2006: Iraqi police also found five bodies in the Sunni town of Adhamiya and two in Bayaa.

• September 6, 2006: Police found 22 bodies of men shot to death, 19 of which were in Baghdad.

• September 8, 2006: Iraqi police found 14 bodies throughout Baghdad that showed signs of torture.

• September 9, 2006: Iraqi police found 16 shot bodies in and around Baghdad and pulled seven bodies out of the Tigris.

• September 13, 2006: Police found the bodies of 65 men who had been tortured, shot and dumped, most around Baghdad. 60 of the bodies were found overnight around Baghdad, with the majority dumped in predominantly Sunni Arab neighborhoods. Another five were found floating down the Tigris river in Suwayrah, 25 miles south of the capital. All of the bodies appeared to have signs of torture and many were handcuffed.

• September 14, 2006: The tortured bodies of 20 men were discovered across Baghdad.

• September 15, 2006: Police found the bodies of 30 people, who bore signs of torture.

• September 16, 2006: At least 21 bodies were discovered throughout the capital.

• September 17, 2006: Police found 24 bodies in various parts of Baghdad.

• September 24, 2006: In the northern city of Beiji, gunmen threw the decapitated heads of ten Iraqi army soldiers into a popular market.

• September 29, 2006: Police found the bodies of seven torture victims in Baghdad.

• September 30, 2006: Police found 60 bodies in and around Baghdad.

• October 2, 2006: In Baghdad, police recovered the tortured bodies of 40 victims of sectarian violence.

• October 9-10, 2006: Police found the bodies of 60 victims of sectarian violence in the capital.

• October 13, 2006: The bodies of 14 workers, their throats slit and their hands and legs bound were found in an orchard near Dhuluiya. The laborers were from the mostly Shi'ite town of Balad, north of Baghdad.

• October 15, 2006: About 80 bodies were found in 24 hours in the neighboring cities of Balal and Duluiyah.

• October 19, 2006: Police found 31 bodies in Baghdad.

• October 22, 2006: The interior ministry found 50 bodies in 24 hours in Baghdad and three bodies were found in Mosul.

• November 3, 2006: 56 bodies were found in Baghdad in 24 hours.

• November 12, 2006: 22 bodies were found in Baghdad and 12 in Mosul.

• November 14, 2006: Police found 12 bodies bound and shot in Latifiya.

• November 19, 2006: Police found 45 bodies in Baghdad.

• November 20, 2006: Police found 60 bodies in Baghdad.

• November 22, 2006: Police found 52 bodies in Baghdad.

• December 2, 2006: Police found 44 bodies in Baghdad.

• December 3, 2006: Police found six bodies in Mosul and 55 in Baghdad.
• December 4, 2006: Police found six bodies in Mosul.
• December 5, 2006: Police found 60 bodies in Baghdad.
• December 7, 2006: Police found three bodies, with gunshot wounds and signs of torture, in
  Iskandariya.
• December 10, 2006: Police found 40 bodies in Baghdad.
• December 16, 2006: Police found 53 bodies in Baghdad.
• December 17, 2006: Police found the bodies of two people, shot dead and tortured, in Jurf al-Sakhar.
  Police found the bodies of two people shot dead in Mussayab. Police found the bodies of five people,
  shot and tortured, near Rutba.
• December 19, 2006: The bodies of four people were found in different parts of Mosul. A total of 12
  bodies, including two women, were found in different parts of Baquba.
• December 20, 2006: Twelve bodies were found in Baquba. Among those found dead in Baghdad were
  the coach of the Olympic bicycling team who had been kidnapped three days earlier, a former
  wrestling star, and a television actor.
• December 21, 2006: A record number 76 bodies were found in Baghdad, police said. All were men
  aged 20-55 and few showed signs of torture. They were killed with automatic weapons, but not in the
  execution style attributed to Shi’ite militias.
• December 23, 2006: Police retrieved the bodies of three people from the river in Diwaniya.
• December 24, 2006: A total of 47 bodies were found shot dead and mostly showing signs of torture in
  different districts of Baghdad.
• December 25, 2006: 40 bodies were found in Baghdad. A total of seven bodies, including three
  policemen, were found in different districts of Mosul.
• December 26, 2006: 40 bodies were found in Baghdad. The bodies of six people, gagged and bound,
  were found in two districts in Baquba.
• December 28, 2006: Police found 41 bodies in different parts of Baghdad. Police found three bodies,
  tortured and shot dead, in Mosul.
• December 31, 2006: A total of 12 bodies were found shot dead and most showing signs of torture in
  Baghdad. Police said the bodies of four people who had been tortured and shot dead were found in
  Mahmudiya.
• January 1, 2007: The hospital in Mosul received the bullet-riddled bodies of three brothers. Police
  found 40 bodies in Baghdad, including 15 in one place near the Sheikh Maa’rouf cemetery in western
  Baghdad.
• January 2, 2007: Police found five bodies bearing signs of torture and bullet wounds in the town of
  Nahrawan. Police in Baghdad found the bodies of 45 people.
• January 4, 2007: The bodies of four people were found shot dead in and around the city of Hilla.
• January 5, 2007: Police said they found three bodies bearing signs of torture and bullet wounds in
  Iskandariya. Police recovered 47 bodies in Baghdad.
• January 6, 2007: Police recovered 71 bodies in Baghdad. Police found a headless body in the town of
  Riyadh.
• January 7, 2007: Police found four bodies, including one that had been decapitated, in Suwayra. Police
  found the bodies of 17 people in Baghdad, many tortured and with gunshot wounds.
• January 8, 2007: Police found 25 bodies in Baghdad. Five unidentified bodies were found in different parts of the northern city of Mosul, police and hospital sources said.

• January 10, 2007: Four bodies with signs of torture and gunshot wounds were found on the outskirts of Qaim. The bodies of four people were found shot dead and bound in the town of Mahaweel. A body was found shot dead and bound in Iskandariya.

• **Seek to create sanctuaries like Fallujah and the river areas in Al Anbar, Ninevah, and Mosul Provinces; and to take shelter in mosques, shrines, and high value targets, and targets with high cultural impact:** Again, exploiting facilities of religious, cultural, and political sensitivity is not a new tactic. However, as operations against Sadr and in Fallujah have shown, the tactics raise the media profile, create a defensive deterrent, and can be exploited to make the US seem anti-Islamic or to be attacking a culture and not a movement.

Areas like mosques are also used by insurgents to conduct meetings and serve as sanctuaries by allowing them to give orders face to face without having to worry about a US presence. For example in April 2006, Marines on patrol in Ramadi encountered fire from a mosque minaret and were forced to use a tank to destroy part of the structure where the insurgents were holed up. It marked the fourth time in a three-week period that attacks had emanated from the mosque. In a different case, driving insurgent cells out of Iraq’s cities in 2004 led them to move into Al Anbar Province in the West, and to seek shelter in towns along the route from the Syrian border along the Euphrates, and through Qaim, Rawaa, Haithah, and Fallujah to Baghdad. Insurgents have also taken refuge in the largely Sunni towns and cities along the Tigris from Mosul to Baghdad. The areas along the rivers gave the insurgents a population to hide in and disperse among. Unlike the flat desert areas, there were also hills, tree cover, and numerous built up areas, with many potential ambush sites and predictable lines of communication where IEDs could be implanted. While Coalition forces could always enter such areas, they could rarely stop the insurgents from dispersing and later regrouping— at least in those cases where no permanent garrison and defense force was deployed and the Iraqi government did not provide effective governance. As late as the winter of 2005, insurgents continued to exert control over a number of Iraqi cities. In early December, some 300 insurgents took over the streets of Ramadi for several hours. One eyewitness told The Washington Times:

> It was easy for them to take Ramadi…it was like a message to the American and Iraqi forces to show their power, their ability to take a city.

In many other incidents, insurgents held cities for several days or weeks at time. Faris and Ameriya, two cities in Iraq’s violent Anbar province, were without police officers for seven months in 2005, from February until September.

• **Exploit, exaggerate, and falsify US attacks that cause civilian casualties, collateral damage, friendly fire against local allies, and incidents where the US can be blamed for being anti-Arab and anti-Islam:** Terrorists and insurgents have found they can use the media, rumor, and conspiracy theories to exploit the fact that the US often fights a military battle without proper regard for the fact it is also fighting a political, ideological, and psychological war.

Real incidents of US misconduct such as the harsh treatment of detainees and prisoners, and the excessive security measures are cases in point. So too are careless political and media rhetoric by US officials and military officers.

Bin Laden, the Iraqi insurgents, etc., all benefit from every Western action that unnecessarily angers or frustrates the Arab and Islamic worlds. They are not fighting to influence Western or world opinion; they are fighting a political and psychological war to dominate Iraq and the Arab and Islamic worlds.

In one instance a joint US-Iraqi raid on a suspected insurgent hideout, was portrayed in the Iraqi media as an assault on a mosque, which killed 16 worshippers. The “mosque” was marked on the outside by a sign that read “Al-Moustafa Husayniyah.” “Husayniyah” is a Shi’ite term for a religious center or a community center that may also house offices for political purposes. Thus, although the complex did not have many of the traditional characteristics of a “mosque,” it was considered to be on by the Shi’ites nonetheless.
Regardless of whether the facility was a mosque, a prayer room, or neither, the operation had damaging political effects.

- **Kill members of the constitutional committee and the newly elected legislature:** This tactic discourages political participation, or in the case of the Sunni delegation, deprives the committee of the necessary numbers of Sunni participants to move forward. Proceeding without the requisite numbers of Shi’ites, Sunnis, and Kurds would thus bring the committee’s legitimacy into question.

  After weeks of protesting their lack of representation on the constitutional committee, Sunni Arab groups reached a compromise with senior members of the Shi’ite dominated body on June 16, 2005. Under the deal, 15 Sunni Arabs representatives joined the committee. As a result, the committee grew in size from 55 to 70. An additional 10 Sunni Arabs were given special advisory roles, serving as consultants in the constitutional process. US officials strongly supported the changes in the hopes that it would lead to greater Sunni participation in the upcoming constitutional referendum.

  Insurgents did not take long to strike, however. On July 19, gunmen assassinated Mijbil Issa, one of the newly appointed Sunni delegates working on the constitution. His bodyguard and one of the Sunni consultants, Dhamin Hussein al-Obeidi, were also killed. The three men were leaving a Baghdad restaurant when three gunmen inside a minibus opened gunfire on the car carrying them. For many of Iraq’s Sunnis, the violence showed the consequences of participating in Iraq’s new political process.

  On July 20, the 12 remaining members of the Sunni Arab delegation -two had earlier resigned after being threatened by insurgents-suspended their membership in protest over the murder. Five days later, the delegation ended its boycott and returned to the committee.

- **Attack, kill and kidnap Iraqi politicians, government leaders and employees in an attempt to disrupt the political process:** Members of the Iraqi National Assembly were frequent targets of attacks by insurgents in 2005. Although many believed Sunnis members of the Assembly were being singled out for attacks, a list of some of those killed shows that both Shi’ites and Kurds were among the victims as well:

  - April 27, 2005: Insurgents in Baghdad gun down Lamia Abed Khadouri Sakri. She was elected in January as part of Prime Minister Ayad Allawi’s Iraqi List Party, which received 40 seats in the new cabinet. Sakri is the first member of the Iraqi National Assembly to be assassinated. June 28, 2005: A suicide attack takes the life of Sheik Dhari Fayad, the oldest member of the Iraqi National Assembly.
  
  - July 30, 2005: Sheik Khalaf Aliyan, a member of the Sunni National Dialogue Council, escaped an assassination attempt in southern Baghdad.
  
  - These targeted political attacks spiked in August:

    - August 1, 2005: In Baghdad, gunmen storm the house of Haider Mohammed Ali al-Dujaili, an aide to Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Chalabi, and kill him.
    
    - August 3, 2005: Gunmen kill General Abdel Salam Rauf Saleh, the head of the Interior Ministry’s commando unit. Also in Baghdad, gunmen kill a police colonel and two finance ministry employees.
    
    - August 4, 2005: In Diyala, gunmen kill the director of planning for the region.
    
    - August 8, 2005: In Baghdad, gunmen assassinate two officials from the Oil Ministry and wound two others.
    
    - August 9, 2005: Gunmen assassinate Abbas Ibrahim Mohammed, an Iraqi Cabinet employee, in Baghdad.
    
    
    - August 14, 2005: In Baghdad, gunmen kidnap Husam Kazim Juwayid, general manager of the central bank.
• August 15, 2005: Gunmen assassinate Muhammad Husayn, a member of the municipal council of Al-Khalis. A failed assassination attempt is carried out on Iraqi Vice-President Adil Ab-al-Mahdi in Al-Azim.

• August 16, 2005: Gunmen attack and wound several bodyguards of former Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi.

• August 17, 2005: Gunmen assassinate Ali al-Shimmari, a local imam and a member of the Association of Muslim Scholars, in northeastern Baghdad.

• August 18, 2005: Unknown gunmen assassinate Jasim Waheeb, a Baghdad judge.

• August 19, 2005: Insurgents in Mosul gun down three members of the Iraqi Islamic Party, the country’s largest Sunni party. Gunmen kill Aswad al-Ali, an Arab member of a local council near Kirkuk.

• August 25, 2005: Insurgents attack the convoy of Iraqi president Jalal Talabani south of Tuz Khormato killing two bodyguards and wounding three others.

• August 26, 2005: In Mosul, gunmen kill Jiyam Hussein, the leader of the local Reform Party. Gunmen assassinate an Iraqi police officer in northeast Baghdad.

• September 17, 2005: Gunmen kill Faris Nasir Hussein, a member of Iraq’s Shabak ethnic minority. Hussein was elected to parliament on the Kurdish ticket. The attack, which took place on a road from Mosul, also injured another politician, Haidar Qassem.

• On October 30, gunmen assassinated Ghalib Abdul Mahdi, adviser to the cabinet of Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari and brother of Vice President Adel Abdul Mahdi. Mahdi was being driven to work in Baghdad by his driver when the two were ambushed and killed. Gunmen struck again later in the day, wounding the deputy trade minister, Qais Dawood al-Hassan. Such attacks, attempts by the insurgents to weaken the new government, are becoming more frequent.

• After the success of the October referendum, insurgents stepped up their attacks against Iraqi politicians in preparation for the December 15 parliamentary elections. As part of pre-election violence, insurgents unleashed a wave of assassinations and kidnappings targeting candidates running in the elections as well as election workers. For the month of November, these included:

• November 3, 2005: An internet statement posted on a website by Al Qa’ida in Iraq says the group had kidnapped Majida Yussef Sael, a candidate in the December elections and a member of Prime Minister Iyad Allawi’s party.

• November 8, 2005: In Kirkuk, insurgents kidnap Hatam Mahdi al-Hassani, the brother of a leading Sunni Arab politician.

• November 12, 2005: Jamal Khaz’al, the chairman of the Iraqi Islamic Party in Basra, escaped an assassination attempt.

• November 13, 2005: Insurgents assassinate Kiaweh, a member of the Al-Naafi Advisory Council.

• November 17, 2005: Tariq al-Ma’muri, the deputy chairman of the Al-Ummah al-Iraqiyah Party and a candidate for the upcoming elections, escaped an assassination attempt in Al-Qut.

• November 18, 2005: For the second day in a row, Ma’muri escaped an assassination attempt. This time in southern Baghdad.

• November 18, 2005: Insurgents kidnapped Tawfiq al-Yasiri, secretary general of Iraqi Democratic Coalition and Shams al-Iraq candidate.

• November 22, 2005: Unknown gunmen broke into the headquarters of the Communist Party’s branch offices in Sadr City, and killed two activists.
November 23, 2005: Insurgents wearing Iraqi army uniforms burst into the home of Khadim Sarhid al-Hemaiyem, a Sunni candidate in the upcoming elections and the head of Iraq’s Batta clan, killing him along with three of his sons and his son-in-law.

November 26, 2005: In a statement posted on an Islamist website, Al Qa’ida in Iraq announced it had killed Miqdad Ahmed Sito, a Kurdish election activist, on November 22 in Mosul.

November 28, 2005: Gunmen in Baghdad kill Ayad Alizi and Ali Hussein. Both were members of the Iraqi Islamic Party, a Sunni party that had boycotted the January elections but was running candidates in the December elections. Alizi had been selected to run as part of a Sunni ticket.


November 28, 2005: Insurgents attacked members of the Assyrian Party in Mosul, killing two and wounding two others.

November 30, 2005: Gunmen fired on the home of Salama Khafaji, a prominent female Shi’ite politician, wounding two guards.

December 4, 2005: In Baghdad, gunmen killed Sheik Abdul-Salam Abdul-Hussein, a Shi’ite Muslim candidate running in the upcoming general elections and a follower of Moqtada al-Sadr.

December 5, 2005: An election worker was killed and his assistant wounded in Baquba.

December 13, 2005: Gunmen in Ramadi killed Sunni Arab candidate Mizhar al-Dulaimi.

December 13, 2005: A roadside bomb in Latifiyah, south of Baghdad, targeted the convoy of Sheik Jalal Eddin al-Sagheer, a Shi’ite member of the National Assembly.

Assassinations, attempted assassinations and kidnappings of political figures, government workers and their families continued even after the elections had ended.

December 17, 2005: Gunmen killed two relatives of a senior Kurdish official in Mosul. The men, Dhiab Hamad al-Hamdani and his son-were relatives of PUK party official Khodr Hassan al-Hamdani.

December 19, 2005: Ziyad Ali al-Zawba’i, the Deputy Governor of Baghdad, and three of his bodyguards escaped an assassination attempt in the western Baghdad district of Al-Amil. The brother of Sa’d Nayif al-Hardan, minister of state for governorate affairs, was kidnapped in Al-Khalidiyah City in western Iraq.


2006 also proved devastating for political figures and government workers.

January 3, 2006: In Baghdad, gunmen kidnapped the sister of Bayan Jabr, the interior minister.

January 4, 2006: Gunmen kill Rahim Ali Sudani, a director-general at the oil ministry, in Baghdad.

January 18, 2006: The bodies of three men, including a relative of Iraq’s defense minister, were found with gunshot wounds to the head in a Baghdad apartment. Gunmen in the area of Al-Ghazaliyah in western Baghdad assassinated the bodyguard of Abd-al-Aziz al-Hakim, head of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq.

January 21, 2006: A roadside bomb blast also wounded five bodyguards of President Jalal Talabani in northern Iraq.

January 26, 2006: Two Iraqi government employees were gunned down by drive-by militants in separate attacks in the northern city of Kirkuk. One was a senior official of Iraq’s anti-corruption commission.
- February 8, 2006: Iraq's higher education minister escaped unharmed from a car bomb attack on his convoy that lightly wounded three of his bodyguards.


- February 13, 2006: Iraq's former electricity minister, Ayham al-Samarie, escaped injury when a roadside bomb exploded near his three-vehicle convoy in Baghdad, but two bodyguards were wounded.


- March 2, 2006: Gunmen opened fire on the car of Iraqi Sunni political leader of the Iraqi Accordance Front Adnan al-Dulaimi killing a bodyguard and wounding three others as the car was stopped to repair a punctured tire.

- April 3, 2006: A prominent Sunni Arab politician, Salih Mutlaq, said that his brother had been kidnapped ten days ago, in a Sunni area north of Baghdad.

- April 12, 2006: An internal affairs officer at the Interior Ministry was killed by men in two cars while leaving his house in western Baghdad. A Housing Ministry employee was killed as he drove to work in the same neighborhood, police said. In northern Baghdad, gunmen shot down an Oil Ministry worker at a bus stop. Two Iraqi contractors supplying the army with food were forced off the road and shot by insurgents near Kirkuk.

- April 13, 2006: A Foreign Ministry worker was kidnapped and a Health Ministry laborer wounded in a shooting that killed her driver. A Housing Ministry employee was also wounded in a drive by shooting. Gunmen killed the brother of prominent Sunni politician Tariq al-Hashemi.

- April 17, 2006: The body of the brother of Saleh al-Mutlak, a conservative Sunni parliament member, was found. He was kidnapped two weeks prior.

- May 9, 2006: Two judges were killed in Baghdad: A judge in Al-Adhamiya First Instance Court, Mr. Mohaimen Al-Mahmood, was gunned down outside his home, and a judge in Central Criminal Court in Iraq, Mr. Iskandar Al-Jiboury, was poisoned with his body guards.


- May 12, 2006: A lawyer and son of the President of the High Judicial Council, was killed with his bodyguards.

- May 14, 2006: Four guards for Iraq’s foreign minister were killed and five wounded by a roadside bomb while on their way from Erbil.

- May 19, 2006: Omer Serri, the secretary of Ramadi's governor, was shot and killed while driving in western Anbar province.

- May 21, 2006: A judge from the Al-Kharkh court in Baghdad, Mr. Akrem Jumaa Al-Maamori, was killed.

- May 22, 2006: Gunmen shot and killed Hameed Rodhan, a high-ranking official in the Ministry of Youth, in the Sadiya neighborhood in southern Baghdad.

- May 25, 2006: Brig. Gen. Khalil al-Abadi, head of the Defense Ministry logistics office, was wounded in an ambush as he was driven to work in the Zafraniyah district. His driver was also wounded.
• May 30, 2006: Jamal Kadhim Hassoun al-Zamili, former governor of Diwaniyah city was killed in a drive-by shooting.

• May 31, 2006: A bomb hidden in an air conditioner exploded in the mayor's office in Muqdadiyah, killing the mayor, Sheik Alaywi Farhan al-Dulaimi, a member of the Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party, and wounding three of his guards.

• June 3, 2006: In Kirkuk, a Kurdish politician was assassinated.

• June 7, 2006: Gunmen opened fire on an employee of the president's office as he was driving, injuring him.

• June 9, 2006: In Mosul, Mr. Anwar Hussein Abdullah, a former Deputy Governor, was killed by unknown gunmen.

• June 9, 2006: Also in Mosul, gunmen killed the brother of the Governor of Ninewa, Mr. Zuhayr Kashmula, and four others as they were leaving prayers.

• June 10, 2006: The Governor of Ninewa, Mr. Duraid Kashmula, survived an assassination attempt while attending his brother’s funeral.1136

• June 21, 2006: Up to 80 employees of the Ministry of Industry were captured on their way to largely Shi’a neighborhoods throughout Baghdad. The woman and children were immediately released as were several others who showed the kidnappers fake Sunni identification cards.1137

• June 23, 2006: Gunmen assassinated Musa Hachim, director of the Iraqi Intelligence Service’s Tikrit office.

• July 2, 2006: Gunmen ambushed a convoy carrying Laqa al-Yaseen, a Shiite legislator, as she was driving through a region south of Baghdad. Although the legislator escaped unharmed, eight of her guards were abducted and two were wounded in a shootout.

• July 5, 2006: Gunmen in camouflage uniforms kidnapped Deputy Electricity Minister Raed al-Hares, along with 11 of his bodyguards in eastern Baghdad, but they were released several hours later.

• July 17, 2006: Gunmen killed Major General Fakhri Abdul Hassan Ali, Chief of the Legal Office in the MOI.

• August 30, 2006: Gunmen killed Nadiya Muhammad Hasan, Director General of the Public Notary in the Ministry of Justice.

• September 8, 2006: Gunmen wounded a local council member and his bodyguard in Khalis

• September 15, 2006: Sheik Muhanad al-Gharairi, a spokesman for a Sunni political party was shot and killed by gunmen, a party official said.

• September 17, 2006: Gunmen assassinated the vocal Sunni politician and official with the Iraqi Accordance Front, Mohammed Shihab Dulaimi, as he returned from an interview.

• September 24, 2006: In the city of Fallujah, gunmen broke into the home of city council head Najim Abdulla Suod, killing him and his 23-year-old son.

• October 2, 2006: Armed men attempted to kidnap four female employees of the Finance Ministry, but police managed to fight them off. Gunmen also shot at an Education Ministry convoy, killing one guard.

• October 6, 2006: Shi’ite militias killed Mohammed Ridha Mohammed. He was a member of the Islamic Group, a conservative Sunni party in the Kurdish Alliance that is the second largest bloc in parliament. He and his driver were ab ducted after leaving government offices and their tortured bodies were later found in another part of Baghdad. Mr. Mohammed was the first lawmaker abducted from Mr. Maliki’s six-month old government.
October 9, 2006: Shi’ite gunmen assassinated the brother of Sunni Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi. The gunmen wore Iraqi military uniforms when they broke into Lt. Gen. Amir al-Hashimi’s home. He was a defense ministry adviser and the third of the vice president’s siblings to be killed in 2006.

October 17, 2006: Gunmen shot dead Muftah al-Herki, a member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), in a drive-by shooting in Mosul.

November 14, 2006: Between 100 and 150 employees and visitors at the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Scholarships and Cultural Relations Directorate in the downtown Karradah district were kidnapped by about 80 gunmen.

November 19, 2006: Deputy Health Minister, Ammar al-Assafar, was kidnapped Sunday by gunmen dressed in security uniforms from his home in the Baghdad Sunni district of Adhamiyah.

November 21, 2006: A bomb exploded in an armored car among those belonging to the speaker of Parliament, wounding the American security guard who was driving it out of a parking area in the government Green Zone and disrupting a meeting of lawmakers nearby, a parliamentary aide said. Though the speaker, Mahmoud al-Mashhadani, was not in the vehicle and was unscathed, the assassination attempt was one of the most serious breaches of security yet within the Green Zone.

November 23, 2006: About 30 militants attacked the Iraqi Health Ministry in central Baghdad with mortars and gunfire, an Interior Ministry source and the deputy health minister said. The ministry source said five people were wounded.

December 2, 2006: Deputy Prime Minister Salam Zikam Ali Zubaie, a member of the major Sunni legislative bloc, was targeted by gunmen while his convoy was traveling in Ghazaliya, a majority Sunni area of Baghdad, police said. He was unharmed, but one of his bodyguards was injured. Rockets struck near the office of Adnan Dulaimi, leader of a major Sunni party within Zubaie’s bloc.

December 3, 2006: Gunmen kidnapped an advisor to the electricity minister.

December 18, 2006: Gunmen killed a woman and wounded two others when they attacked a group of female staff at the Ministry of Education in Amil district in southwestern Baghdad.

December 22, 2006: Ahmed al-Yaseen, brother of Sunni Accordance Front parliament member Abdel Kareem al-Yaseen, was killed along with his wife when a car bomb exploded in front of his home in Samarra. His four children were also wounded, police said.

December 23, 2006: A bodyguard of Vice President Adel Abdul Mahdi was killed by a "foreigner assailant" near the office of Abdul Mahdi in Baghdad, the vice president’s office said.

December 26, 2006: Gunmen kidnapped Muhannad Ahmed Saleh, director of the Baghdad International Fair, on his way to work in Amiriya district in western Baghdad.

December 27, 2006: Gunmen attacked a bus carrying employees of the Ministry of Higher Education and wounded two of them in a drive-by shooting in Yarmouk district in western Baghdad.

December 28, 2006: A suicide bomber in a minibus attacked the offices of the Kurdistan Democratic Party in the northern city of Mosul, witnesses said.

January 7, 2007: Habib al-Shimiri, a senior Education Ministry official, survived a roadside bomb attack on his car near the al-Shaab football stadium in east central Baghdad, but two of his guards were killed, police said.

January 8, 2007: Gunmen kidnapped a senior tribal chief named Naji Hussein Jubara in Salahaddin province, seizing him from his car on the road north of Samarra, police said. Jubara is the brother of the deputy governor of the province.

January 9, 2007: Gunmen kidnapped Abdul Ghafour al-Jouburi, head of the customs department in northern Iraq.
• January 11, 2007: Gunmen kidnapped eight high ranking oil ministry officials on their way to work in Baghdad. The gunmen separation Shi’ites from Sunnis, beat the Shi’ites, then took the four Sunnis with them and said that their bodies would be found on the streets the following day.

• January 21, 2007: Gunmen in American military uniforms, flak jackets, and SUVs attacked the provincial governor’s office in Kerbala.

• January 22, 2007: Sunni insurgents of Ansar al-Sunna kidnapped the governor of Diyala Province and burnt down his office.

Methods of Attack in Combat

There is no clear division between the mix of insurgent and terrorist tactics focused on the political and psychological nature of war and those that focus more directly on attacking military targets like MNF-I and Iraqi government forces, Iraqi and Coalition officials, and the Iraqi economy and nation building process. The insurgents again made major adaptations in their tactics and methods of attack that still further increased the problems in creating effective Iraqi forces:

• Adapt targets to place maximum pressure on Iraqi social and political apparatuses: Insurgents have adapted their tactics as well, focusing greater attention on Iraqi military forces and police. In January 2005, 109 Iraq police and military were killed through insurgent activity. By May, this number had spiked to 259, and by July 304. As the Iraqi constitutional process unfolded – which the Sunnis were largely absent from due to their widespread boycott of the Parliamentary election – sectarian violence became increasingly apparent. Sunni attacks on Iraqi security and political figures increased as radicals sought to derail the political process. On August 19, 2005, three Sunni election workers were kidnapped in Mosul, driven to Al Noor and executed before a throng of people gathered before the Al Noor Mosque. Of the three election workers murdered, one was identified as Faris Yunis Abdullah, a senior official in the mostly Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party. The three men who were posting placards encouraging Iraqis to vote in the October 15 election when they were abducted. In the end of 2005 and beginning of 2006, the number of Iraqi military and police killed per month hovered around 200. In November, December and January, deaths totaled 176, 193 and 194, respectively. Targeting Iraqi security forces continued through 2006.

• Suicide bombs, car bombs, and mass bombings: The use of such tactics increased steadily after late 2003, in part due to the high success rate relative to alternative methods of attack. By late 2004, exploding vehicles accounted for approximately 60% of Iraqi police and recruit fatalities. Suicide attacks have increased, and killed and wounded Iraqis in large numbers. The number of car bombs rose from 420 in 2004 to 873 in 2005, the number of suicide car bombs rose from 133 to 411, and the number of suicide vest attacks rose from 7 in 2004 to 67 in 2005. In case after case, Shi’ite civilians and Sunnis cooperating with the government were successfully targeted in ways designed to create a serious civil war.

According to the Associated Press, there were 190 suicide bomb attacks in the six-months between the creation of the interim Iraqi government on April 28 and October 28, 2005. Suicide attacks claimed some 1,458 lives, roughly one-third of all violence-related deaths during this period. Of the 3,902 Iraqis killed, 1,128 were security personnel and the overwhelming majority, 2,744, were civilians. More than 40 percent of the fatalities occurred in the greater Baghdad area. After Baghdad, the cities with the largest number of fatalities from suicide attacks were Mosul, Tal Afar, Balad and Kirkuk with 196, 188, 124 and 118 deaths respectively. September proved to be the deadliest month for these attacks, with at least 804 people killed. That number fell by almost half in October.

The trend appeared to continue into the winter. In November, there were only 23 suicide attacks, the lowest number in seven months. Maj. Gen. Mark Lynch attributed the drop to successful US and Iraqi operations along the Syrian border designed to prevent weapons and insurgents from infiltrating Iraq. Lynch said at least 96 percent of suicide bombers come from outside of Iraq.

It is not always clear that suicide-bombing techniques were tactically necessary. In many cases, timed devices might produce the same damage. Events in Iraq showed, however, that suicide bombers had a
major psychological impact and gain exceptional media attention. They also came to serve as symbols of dedication and commitment, can be portrayed as a form of Islamic martyrdom, and attract more political support and attention among those sympathetic to the cause involved.

The “cost” of suicide bombers was also low. While no reliable figures are available, only about 10% seemed to have been Iraqis as of August 2005, and most had been recruited from outside Iraq by various Islamist organizations. Key sources were North Africa, the Sudan, Jordan, Syria, Gulf states like Saudi Arabia, and Central Asia.

The limited evidence available indicates that many were chosen because they could be persuaded to seek Islamic martyrdom, and do so collectively and without trying to call great public attention to themselves. They often could be rapidly indoctrinated and given minimal training and then be used as “force multipliers” for relatively small Islamic extremist groups. A single volunteer could use a strap-on bomb, or single vehicle filled with explosives, penetrate a crowded area or high profile target area, and then set off an explosion producing high casualties.

Many of these attacks were aimed at soft targets such as Iraqi civilians. The increase in the use of explosive vests worn by individuals in some cases enabled the attacker to infiltrate into areas populated with Iraqi forces, often secured by a perimeter designed to defend against car bombs and suicide car bombers.

Even when such attacks fail to reach their target the explosion often got intense public and media attention. They also became political weapons by exploiting the fact Arab Sunni Islamists were being used to kill and maim large numbers of Arab Shi’ites and Kurds, as well as any Sunni volunteers and military in the Iraqi forces. Some of the larger weapons approached the status of weapons of mass terrorism, and even much smaller levels of casualties got enough attention to make them weapons of mass media and weapons of mass politics – tools that could be used to encourage ethnic and sectarian civil war. In the spring of 2005, some 170 such attacks were conducted in April, 151 in May, and 133 in June.

These attacks generate even greater public and media attention when women carry them out. Zarqawi has asserted that many Iraqi females have come to him asking to be dispatched on suicide missions. In the past, he has used this to try and shame Iraqi males into volunteering for suicide missions. Although Saddam Hussein’s security forces used female bombers at least once during the 2003 war, Al Qa’ida in Iraq did not begin using female suicide bombers until the fall of 2005. (Prior to 2005, Coalition forces had reported capturing a number of female suicide bombers on foot, including one trying to enter the Green Zone in October 2003.)

The first female suicide attack occurred on September 28 in the city of Tal Afar. After having been denied entry to a civil military operations building, the bomber detonated her explosives in a nearby square where Iraqi civilians and US soldiers often interacted. The attack claimed the lives of five civilians and injured more than 30. Zarqawi’s organization asserted responsibility for the attack in an Internet posting saying a “sister” of the Malik Suicidal Brigade had carried out the successful mission.

The first female suicide attack of the insurgency was followed closely by a female suicide car bombing. On October 11, a female suicide bomber detonated her car near a group of US soldiers on patrol in Mosul. The only other known incident of a female suicide car bomber occurred in Haditha in April of 2003 when two women, acting on the orders of officials in Saddam Hussein’s regime, killed three US soldiers.

In response to the bombing in Tal Afar, the regional police chief-General Ahmed Mohammed Khalaf-issued the following statement:


Today’s attack seems to represent a new tactic by the insurgents to use women, who are rarely searched at the Tal Afar checkpoints because of religious and social traditions that grant women special treatment.

Because of the bombing, Gen. Khalaf said women and children would now be searched “in the same manner as men”. Cultural and religious barriers have made any interaction between US forces and Iraqi women difficult in the past. Following the attacks, the Ministry of Defense announced there would be no new security measures other than “being more aware that females as well as men can be suicide bombers.”
The most well-known Iraqi female suicide bomber was that of Sajida Mubarak al-Rishawi, a 35-year-old mother of four from Ramadi, who was to have been the fourth suicide bomber of the November 9 hotel attacks in Amman. Rishawi fled the Radisson hotel after her husband detonated his explosives and her own failed to go off. She was picked up by Jordanian police three days later and made a televised statement that was subsequently aired around the world.

Hussein al-Dulaimi, a cousin of Rishawi, believes she was motivated by anger and humiliation. Three of her brothers were killed by US forces in Iraq. According to Dulaimi, the family was often harassed by US troops.1151

“In one incident, Sajida’s house was raided, and an American soldier put his boot on the head of Sajida’s husband…that made her very angry, as this was a big insult against her and her husband.”

Rishawi’s case is unusual in that it is believed to be the first case of husband and wife suicide bombers.

In late November, reports surfaced that a European woman had been involved in a suicide attack in Iraq. Iraqi officials believe a Belgian woman who had converted to Islam after marrying a radical Muslim carried out a November 9 attack on a US military convoy in Baghdad. The woman, identified as Muriel Degauque, was the only fatality in the attack and had traveled to Iraq to carry out jihad with her husband.1152 The case was the first instance of a European female suicide bomber.

On December 6, 2005, two female suicide bombers blew themselves up at Baghdad’s police academy, killing at least 43 people and wounding more than 70. The attack was the deadliest against Iraqi security forces since February 28, 2005. Al-Qaeda in Iraq claimed responsibility for the attack.1153

After the December election and in early 2006, suicide bombings continued to target predominately Shi’ites civilians and Iraqi police forces. Although consistent, the December bombings were not particularly deadly. On December 18 in eastern Baghdad, a suicide bomber killed a police officer and injured two others. On December 22, a suicide car bomb in Iskandariyah wounded seven policemen. The following day, In Balad, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives outside a mosque, killing four people. The next day, a suicide car bomber targeting two Iraq army vehicles in Baghdad killed five soldiers and wounded seven others, including several police officers. On December 29, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives near the interior ministry in Baghdad, killing four policemen and wounding five.

In the span of eight days in early January, several suicide bombings targeting police recruits and Shi’ites killed almost 180 people. On January 3, 2006 a suicide car bomber attacked a bus carrying police officers in Baquba, killing three and wounding 14. The following day, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives at a funeral in Miqdadiya, killing 37 Shi’ite mourners and wounding 45 others. On January 5 in Karbala, a suicide bomber struck outside the Imam Hussein Shrine, killing more than 49 Shi’ites. The same day a suicide bomber targeting a police recruitment center in Ramadi killed more than 50 and wounded as many as 60 others. On January 6, a suicide car bomb targeting a police checkpoint in the southern Baghdad neighborhood of Zafaraniya killed one police commando and injured three. Later, in Mosul, a suicide car bomber struck a police patrol, wounding 11 people, including four policemen. On January 9, Two suicide bombers carrying police identity cards and dressed in police uniforms walked up to the Interior Ministry compound on Monday morning and blew themselves up hundreds of yards from a ceremony attended by the American ambassador, killing 29 Iraqis. On January 19, a suicide attacker detonated an explosive vest in a crowded downtown coffee shop, killing 16 and wounding 21.

In early April, three suicide bombers targeted the Baratha mosque in Baghdad, a primary headquarters for SCIRI, killing 79 and wounding more than 140. At least two of the bombers were dressed as women to hide the bombs and slipped into the mosque as the worshippers left. The first bomb detonated at the main exit, and the second inside the mosque as people rushed back in for safety. Ten seconds later, the third bomb exploded.1154 The day prior, a car bomb killed 10 at the Imam Ali shrine in Najaf.

September 2006 was another month with numerous mass bombings and Iraqi civilians bore the brunt of the casualties. On September 13 a car bomb killed at least 19 people and wounded more than 62 after it detonated in a large square used mostly as a parking lot near the main headquarters of Baghdad’s traffic police department. On September 14 another car bomb blew up near the government’s passport office in central Baghdad, killing 9 people and wounding 17. On September 17 in Kirkuk, suicide bombers exploded five vehicles, killing more than two dozen and wounding over 100. The deadliest of the bombs was
detonated outside the Kirkuk police department’s bureau of major crimes, located between the offices of two Kurdish political parties, vividly depicting rising tensions between Kurds and Arabs to take control of the city. Other targets included a private security firm, a police checkpoint, and the house of a Sunni Sheik. On September 18 a suicide bomber killed at least 23 people and wounded 17 others in an open-air market in the northwestern city of Tal Afar. On September 19 a car bomb exploded near a gas station, killing 15 people and wounding more than 50. On September 20 a car bomb detonated in Samarra, north of Baghdad, in front of a house known opponents of al-Qa’ida in Iraq, killing ten and wounding 38. On September 23 a bomb claimed by a Sunni Arab extremist group, Jamaat Jund al-Sahaba Soldiers of the Prophet’s Companions, killed at least 37 Shiites in Baghdad as they stocked up on fuel for Ramadan.

On October 4, 2006 at least 14 people were killed and 75 wounded in a car bomb attack on the convoy of Iraq’s industry minister. Minister Fawzi al-Hariri, a Kurd, was not in the convoy when it was attacked in central Baghdad. A roadside bomb in Sadr City on October 30, 2006 killed 28 and wounded 60.

A reporter for the The Guardian said that insurgents had started using the tactic of renting out a room in an apartment or townhouse complex and filling it with explosives to explode the entire building or street. 1155

On November 23, 2006 the largest single attack since the war began occurred in Sadr City, Baghdad. A series of five car bombs and mortar attacks killed between 200 and 250 people and wounded the same number. Baghdad declared a cerfew and US and Iraqi forces cordoned off the Shi’ite district.

On December 2, 2006 another mass bombing of a Shi’ite area in Baghdad took place, threatening to spark a new series of reprisal attacks. In Baghdad, two car bombs exploded in the market area of Sadriya and one in the market at Hafidh Qadhi, about 100 yards away, said police Lt. Haitham Kamil. Three mortar attacks followed soon afterward in the same areas, police said. The attacks killed more than 60 and wounded close to 100.

The last few weeks of 2006 and the start of 2007 were particulary deadly with a large number of suicide and roadside bombings.

- December 18: A roadside bomb killed a person and wounded another in the town of Hawija. A bomb planted in a car carrying Electricity Ministry officials killed the driver and wounded two in eastern Baghdad. A roadside bomb targeting a police patrol wounded three policemen near the Technology University in central Baghdad. A roadside bomb wounded seven people when it exploded in a wholesale vegetable market in the southern Doura district of Baghdad. A roadside bomb targeting a police patrol wounded two policemen on the main road between Tuz Khurmatu and Kirkuk. A car bomb at the entrance of a wholesale vegetable market killed five people and wounded 19 in the southern Saidiya district of Baghdad.

- December 20: A suicide car bomber rammed his vehicle into a police checkpoint near Baghdad University in the southwestern Jadriya district, killing 11 people and wounding 31, including some students. A car bomb in the parking lot of an Interior Ministry office charged with issuing identity cards killed four people and wounded eight in Adhamiya district in northern Baghdad. A suicide car bomber rammed his car into an Iraqi army checkpoint, killing one soldier and wounding four in a town near Kirkuk. Six people died in central Baghdad when a car bomb exploded near a bus filled with people on the way to the airport.

- December 21: Two policemen were wounded when a roadside bomb exploded near the convoy of police Colonel Adnan Mohammed. A suicide car bomb killed two people and wounded two others in Amil district in southwestern Baghdad. A roadside bomb targeting a U.S. military patrol wounded two civilians in Mosul. A roadside bomb targeting a US military patrol wounded a civilian in Adhamiya district in northern Baghdad. A suicide bomber wearing an explosive vest killed 15 people and wounded 15 more when he blew himself up at a police recruitment centre in eastern Baghdad, the US military and police sources said. Three police officers and 12 recruits were killed.

- December 25: Two US soldiers were killed and one wounded in a roadside bomb attack southwest of Baghdad, the military said. Another roadside bomb in the same area killed one U.S. soldier and wounded two. A suicide bomber targeting a police checkpoint near the main entrance of Anbar University killed three policemen and wounded two students in the city of Ramadi. The U.S. military
A suicide bomber killed three people and wounded 20 others when he blew himself up aboard a crowded bus in the Shi'ite Talibiya district in northeastern Baghdad. A car bomb killed at least 10 people and wounded 15 when it exploded on a busy commercial street in the mainly Shi'ite New Baghdad district of the Iraqi capital.

- December 26: A roadside bomb targeting a police patrol wounded four civilians in Mosul. 40 bodies were found in Baghdad. A roadside bomb killed a child and an elderly man and wounded three university students in Kirkuk. A car bomb near a police station wounded a policeman and four civilians in the oil refining city of Baiji. Three roadside bombs in quick succession killed a police lieutenant colonel and wounded nine people in central Baghdad. A roadside bomb killed five people and wounded 15 others in a crowded area in central Baghdad. Three simultaneous car bombs exploded in southwestern Baghdad, killing 16 people and wounding 70. A car bomb in the mainly Sunni Arab district of Adhamiya in Baghdad killed 15 people and wounded 30. Three U.S. soldiers looking for roadside bombs were killed northwest of Baghdad, the U.S. military said. One soldier was wounded.

- December 27: A roadside bomb targeting an Iraqi army patrol killed three soldiers in the town of Suwayra. A roadside bomb targeting a police patrol wounded five people, three policemen and two civilians, in Camp Sara district in eastern Baghdad. A car bomb killed eight people and wounded 10 in Talibiya.

- December 28: A suicide bomber in a minibus attacked the offices of the Kurdistan Democratic Party in the northern city of Mosul, witnesses said. Police said two people were killed and 19 wounded in the blast. A car bomb exploded at a petrol station near the Shaab stadium in central Baghdad, killing 10 people and wounding 25. Two roadside bombs exploded in Bab al-Sharji in central Baghdad, killing seven people and wounding 35. A roadside bomb targeting an Iraqi police patrol wounded three policemen in Hawija.

- December 29: A roadside bomb killed one U.S. soldier and wounded two others when it hit their patrol in northwest Baghdad. A roadside bomb killed one U.S. soldier and wounded three more in southwest Baghdad.

- December 30: A car bomb in the southern Baghdad neighborhood of Saidiya killed one person and wounded four, including two policemen. A suicide bomber with explosives strapped to his body killed five people and wounded eight, including four policemen, in Tal Afar. A car bomb killed two people and wounded eight in Baghdad's western Mansour neighborhood. Three car bombs exploded in quick succession in the mainly Shi'ite neighbourhood of Hurriya in Baghdad, killing 36 people and wounding 77.

- December 31: Two U.S. soldiers were killed and two more wounded in an explosion in Iraq's Diyala province. A car bomb near a Sunni mosque killed two people and wounded eight on Saturday in al-Dhubat street in Adhamiya district in northern Baghdad. A car bomb killed one person and wounded six others in Hurriya. A car bomb killed one person and wounded four others in central Baghdad.

- January 4: A roadside bomb targeting a police check point killed an Iraqi soldier and wounded four in the town of Iskandariya. Two car bombs near a petrol station killed 13 people and wounded 22 others in Baghdad's western upscale Mansour district, an Interior Ministry source said. Police said it was a roadside bomb followed by a car bomb.

- **Use foreign Islamist volunteers as cannon fodder; put “paid” and low value Iraqi insurgents in high risk positions**: Both Islamist extremist cells and more nationalist cells and groups learned to exploit young men recruited from outside Iraq as “Islamic martyrs” in suicide bombings and other high risk missions. They developed foreign recruiting networks, often staging such volunteers through Syria and Jordan, indoctrinating them, and then using them ruthlessly. Alternatively, groups and cells learned to isolate their leaders, financiers, and experts from high risk and front line missions, sending in inexperienced and junior personnel to take risks – sometimes young Iraqis paid token fees for risking the actual attack. In at least some cases, Iraqis were sent out to conduct high-risk conventional attacks where the planner must have known they had little or no chance of survival.
Stay behinds, diehards, and suicide squads: During and after Fallujah, insurgents increasingly had teams stay behind who seem to have been prepared to die or to seek martyrdom. Many were Iraqis. Their willingness to defend a building or small area with suicidal determination and no regard for retreat often inflicted higher casualties on MNF-I and Iraqi forces.

Mix crude and sophisticated IEDs: Hezbollah should be given credit for perfecting the use of explosives in well structured ambushes, although there is nothing new about such tactics – the Afghans used them extensively against the Soviets. Iraq has, however, provided a unique opportunity for insurgents and Islamist extremists to make extensive use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and vehicle borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) by exploiting its massive stocks of arms. The insurgents were able to draw on large stocks of explosives, as well as large bombs and artillery shells. Nearly 400 tons of HMX and RDX plastic explosive disappeared from the Qaqaa weapons facility alone after the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime.

The Iraqi attackers also learned to combine their extensive use of low grade IEDs, more carefully targeted sophisticated IEDs, very large car bombs and other devices to create a mix of threats and methods that is much more difficult to counter than reliance on more consistent types of bombs and target sets. The insurgents based many of their initial efforts on relatively simple weapons designs, some of which seem to have been adapted from the Arabic translations of US field manuals on booby traps and similar improvised devices. The insurgents soon learned, however, to use more sophisticated detonators and triggering systems to counter US electronic countermeasures, and increase their distance away from the bomb. According to one report, only 10% of the IEDs used in Iraq as of May 2005 were modeled on the pressure-detonation devices shown in US Army Field Manual 5-31 and in a direct Iraqi translation published in 1987. Insurgents had also learned how to make crude shaped-charges to attack US armored and other vehicles.

Triggers for IED devices grew more sophisticated as well. One IED found by soldiers was connected by a wire to a long-range transmitter on top of a telephone poll. Insurgents incorporated new technology with pressure-plated IEDs that are only triggered by tracked vehicles. One soldier remarked about the adaptation of insurgent forces and the use of new technology saying, “I didn’t see that when I first came in.”

Insurgents also incorporated the use of IEDs into the tactic of follow-on attacks or ambushes. This allowed insurgents to target support vehicles that arrive on the scene of an attack, once an initial IED has gone off. Lt. Col. Ross Brown described one such experience: “I brought in vehicles to support them [the patrol] and they hit four more IEDs. These were 250-pound aircraft bombs buried in the dirt. It was an IED ambush.” Once several vehicles are disabled insurgents then attacked the convoy’s using small arms and mortar fire.

By the summer of 2005, insurgents were attempting an average of 65 IED attacks a day. Many were detected and defeated, but their use of shaped charges had become more sophisticated, using technology first developed by the Lebanese Hezbollah. In addition, the insurgents had learned to cluster and stack anti-tank mines, and use brute force IEDs like adapted 500-pound bombs. They also learned the vulnerabilities of US and Coalition armored vehicles and which held the most troops and crew. They learned more about the probable routes Coalition and Iraq forces would have to take, and which kind of attacks would do most to disrupt a given movement.

Insurgent organizations improved in structure to the point where key personnel directing operations, financing them, and providing technical support were far less active in the field, and more and more use was made of foreign volunteers, quickly recruited Iraqis, and Iraqis paid small sums to do part of the work in implanting IEDs.

Small, mostly independent cells came to carry out many operations – a technique which ensured that operations were hard to detect and penetrate, making it difficult to roll up an organization by catching men in the field or interrogating members of any one cell. In some cases, holes and locations for IEDs were prepared by one small team -- sometimes using vehicles with holes cut in the bottom to defeat visual detection. A different team might cruise through an area and plant an IED on a target quickly on of the basis of opportunity to defeat surveillance and patrols. Al Qaeda in Iraq and Ansar al Islam became
IED “teams” also frequently delegated three roles to its members: a lookout, a triggerman, and an emplacer. These cells often also include a rifleman to distract the gunners in the American vehicle while the triggerman detonates the IED device. The emplacer is one of the most valuable members as it is not only a risky position, but necessitates experience to cause increased damage and casualties.\footnote{1162}

The insurgents also paid close attention to US intelligence collection methods, and counter-IED operations and change their behavior accordingly. They used improved methods of concealment such as digging holes in a road and then “paving over” the hole. Other methods have included stealing police, military, and government vehicles, along with uniforms and IDs to penetrate in to secure areas, and linking bombings to ambushes with rifles and RPGs – or additional IEDs – to attack the response force. As Coalition troops became more adept at uncovering IED factories and storage area, insurgents became more systematic with their construction and supply system. IEDs were often built in factories in the small villages around Baghdad then smuggled into the city to a few suppliers who then sell them to insurgents. Insurgents also turned to car dealerships to store munitions and IEDs instead of houses, making transportation easier.\footnote{1163}

In September 2004, General Richard Cody, the US Army Vice Chief of Staff, stated that some 500-600 IEDs were going off each month, and roughly half either harmed US personnel or damaged US vehicles.\footnote{1164} While Coalition forces reported to find some 30-40% of IEDs, and render them safe, by May 2005, they also reported that the number of IED incidents had steadily climbed to some 30 per day.

IEDs accounted for 189 of 720 US combat deaths in 2004 -- about 26 percent. Deaths caused by IEDs rose by more than 41% during the first five months of 2005, compared with a similar period in 2004, and accounted for 51% of the 255 combat deaths as of June 9, 2005. There were 85 deaths attributed to IEDs in the first five months of 2004, and 120 in 2005. This was a primary reason that the number of up armored Humvees in US forces rose from around 200 in the summer of 2004 to 9,000 in June 2005.\footnote{1165}

Lt. General James T. Conway, Director of Operations in the US Joint Staff, stated in May 2005, that a total of 70% of all Coalition casualties to date since the fall of Saddam Hussein had been caused by IEDs, an effort that had been so successful that the US announced that even up armored Humvees were unsafe in high threat areas, and were being replaced with heavily armored 5-ton “gun trucks.”\footnote{1166} The use of roadside bombs remains a major problem for US and other Coalition forces. The total number of IED attacks nearly doubled from 5,607 in 2004 to 10,953 in 2005. While the success rate of IED attacks dropped significantly, from 25-30% in 2004 to 10% in 2005, they still had a major impact. During 2005, there were 415 IED deaths out of a total of 674 combat deaths, or 61.6 % of all combat deaths. IEDs accounted for 4,256 wounded out of a total of 5,941, some 71.6% of the wounded. From July 2005 to January 2006, IEDs killed 234 US service members out of a total of 369 total combat deaths, or 63.4%. They accounted for 2314 wounded out of 2980 total combat wounded, or 77.7 %.

To put these numbers in perspective, IEDs caused 900 deaths out of a total of 1,748 combat deaths, or 51.5 % during the entire post-Saddam fall from March 2003 and January 2006. IEDs caused 9,327 wounded out of a total of 16,606 or 56.2%.\footnote{1167} However, the numbers of personnel killed and wounded by IEDs are scarcely the only measure of insurgent success. Casualties may have dropped but the number of attacks has gone up. IED attacks tie down manpower and equipment, disrupt operations, disrupt economic and aid activity, and interact with attacks on Iraqi civilians and forces to limit political progress and help try to provoke civil war.

Similar data are not available on Iraqi casualties, a larger percent of whom seem to have been hit by suicide bombers and in ambushes, but the chronology in the Appendix to this analysis shows there have been many effective attacks. For example, three Iraqi soldiers were killed and 44 were wounded in a single VBIED bomb attack on their bus on April 6, 2005.\footnote{1168} Iraqi military, security, and police are particularly vulnerable because they have little or no armor, and often must move into insecure facilities or go on leave in unprotected vehicles simply to perform routine tasks like bringing money to their families in a cash-in-hand economy.

The number of roadside bombs continued to increase in the fall of 2005, part of the larger wave of violence unleashed by insurgents in the run-up to the December 15 elections. The US military reported that for
September and October 2005, there were more than 2,000 roadside bombs. While IED attacks had numbered around 700 a month in the spring of 2004, there were 1,029 attacks in August, 1,044 in September and 1,029 in October. Although both the Iraqi and US security forces were becoming more adept at detecting the bombs, the insurgents were planting explosives in greater numbers than ever before.

The lethality and effectiveness of the devices that were successful also increased. In the six month period between May and October 2005, more than 60 per cent of all US troop fatalities were caused by IEDs. Of the more than 569 attacks across Iraq that occurred during the last week of October, 40 percent involved improvised bombs. IED attacks for that period accounted for 64 percent of coalition casualties and 37 percent of Iraqi security force casualties.

Similar trends continued in November. The US suffered 40 deaths from IEDs, almost half of the total losses for the month. In December this number increased; 61 percent of all US troop casualties were from IEDs. Near the end of January, the overall deaths caused by IEDs as a percentage of attacks on US forces was down to just below 40 percent. Yet the US suffered fewer overall casualties that month, 63, nine of which came from helicopter crashes due to hostile fire or mechanical malfunctions.

Gen. Peter Pace, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated at a press briefing in November:

Between the increase in armor and the changes in tactics, techniques and procedures that we’ve employed, the number of attacks-IED attacks-that have [killed or wounded troops] has gone down…That said, there are more overall IED attacks by the insurgents, and we are working on that problem.

But US efforts to combat the effectiveness of the IEDs and find them before they detonate have not always been successful. Jammers used by US troops in Iraq to prevent insurgents from detonating IEDs with cell phones or garage-door openers often interfere with US radio signals, causing troops to turn off the jammers when they use their radios. And newer infrared triggers cannot be blocked by electronic countermeasures, such as devices that jam signals sent from cell phones and remote-control devices used to detonate the bombs.

According to Pentagon spokesman Lawrence Di Rita, IEDs pose a “tough” and evolving challenge because the problem that existed last year “is a different IED problem than the IED problem that exists today.”

In late fall, the Pentagon announced that insurgents were using new triggers or sensors on the devices but that it was unable to figure out where the new technology was coming from or how best to defeat it. Although most bombs were still believed to be coming from inside Iraq, the military said it had evidence that bombs and technology were entering Iraq from the outside. Iran, as discussed below, is the candidate most often suspected as the source of this new technology.

US military officials believe IEDs are likely to be a problem for US forces for years to come, and not just in Iraq. Improvised bombs could become the weapon of choice for future insurgencies and guerilla wars. A 140-person Pentagon task force began working on ways to combat the roadside bombings in mid-2004. Brig. Gen. Joseph Votel, who currently leads the Pentagon’s anti-IED effort, said in early November 2005 that IEDs “remain the only thing that we haven’t solved, I think, in terms of the enemy capability to operate against us.” Lt. Gen. James Conway, the operations director of the Joint Staff, agreed, saying the US military was placing a greater emphasis on IEDs “because it’s the only tool the enemy really has left in order to be able to take us on and be able to really cause casualties.” Similarly, Di Rita has said that once the US finds a way to eliminate the improvised devices, “it’s over.”

The problem of IEDs, and the apparent increase in lethality and sophistication of technology must not be exaggerated however. Pentagon officials asserted in early January 2006 that insurgents had developed “jumping” IEDs and were using them to attack low-flying Coalition helicopters. These claims were retracted later in the month when the Department of Defense released a statement indicating that it did not know of any incidences of this nature.

The Pentagon has been looking at how the British and Israelis dealt with similar problems in Northern Ireland and Lebanon in order to learn from those experiences. So far, however, the taskforce, which has received more than $1.5 billion in funding to date, has been unable to produce a “silver bullet” against IEDs.
In December 2005 the Department of Defense announced that two training centers would be opened in the US to help teach soldiers how to detect and disarm IEDs. Previously, soldiers had only received IED training upon their arrival in Iraq. The headquarters of the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Task Force will be located at Fort Irwin, California. A second training facility will open in January 2005 at Elgin Air Force Base in Florida. Together, the centers will teach soldiers how to use robotics and UAVs as well as other technology to combat the IEDs. Speaking about the centers, Lt. Col. Thomas Magness said: “We’ve got to help these guys before they deploy…the threat evolves every day. This is an enemy that has demonstrated that they’re going to change.”

- **Adapt technology and tactics to match updates in Coalition defense capabilities:** Despite technological advances and changes in tactics by the US military, insurgents continue to remain one step ahead. The summer of 2005 brought an increase in “shaped-charge” explosives, the use of sophisticated infra-red motion detectors to fire them as targets passed by, and new radio-controlled triggers with enough range and power to work from outside the range of the Coalition’s ECM bubble.

The number of American troops killed by IEDs spiked during the summer, with 35 deaths in May; 36 in June; and 39 in July. Another adaptation that has increased the lethality of insurgent IED attacks was the increased size of the weapons, a response to the up armoring of US vehicles. Initially, IEDs in Iraq were small charges composed of single 60mm and 81mm mortars. Insurgents have since increased the size to 122mm and 152mm, and begun to use buried 500 and 1,000-lb airplane bombs to effect an explosive upward force that can render current up-armoring useless. The 39 deaths by bombing in July 2005 was the largest to-date monthly toll since the war began.

In early October 2005, the British government announced that the recent increase in sophisticated roadside bombs in Iraq could be traced to Iran. During the summer of 2005 insurgents began using infrared “trip wires” rather than the less sophisticated remote control devices to detonate IEDs. The technology is similar to that used by Hezbollah in Lebanon. While cautioning that they could not be sure about the level of official or unofficial Iranian involvement, Prime Minister Tony Blair told reporters that new explosive devices being used against Coalition troops in Iraq could nevertheless be traced “either to Iranian elements or to Hezbollah.” In January of 2006, the British government issued a formal protest to Iran after similar electronically triggered devices were found in eastern Iraq. A breakaway group from Moqtada al-Sadr’s militia is believed to be using the trip-wires, as are Sunni insurgents.

From 2004 to 2006, about 6.1 billion was spent by the US in an effort to “defeat” IEDs. In 2006, the Pentagon’s Joint IED Defeat Organization received an increase of 3.3 billion. Despite this investment, Maj. Randall Simmons, a Georgia National Guardsmen deployed in Iraq, said, “As we’ve improved our armor, the enemy’s improved his IEDs. They're bigger, and with better detonating mechanisms.” Lt. Col. Bill Adamson, operations chief for the anti-IED campaign, agreed saying, “They adapt more quickly than we procure technology.”

Although these advances in technology and changes in tactics lowered the casualty rate per IED attack in 2005, the attacks nearly doubled from 5,607 in 2004 to 10,953 in 2005. Therefore, the number of US deaths as a result of IEDs still increased. By mid-2005, 40 US soldiers per month on average, twice the rate of 12 months prior, were killed by IEDs. The sheer number of IED incidents during this time period is illustrated by one 21-man IED response unit who encountered 2,178 incidents in 7 months from the summer of 2005 to the winter of 2006. In March 2006 however, Pentagon spokesman Brian Whitman pointed to the fact that the casualty rate of IEDs is half of what it was the 18 months prior. The summer of 2006, however, saw the largest number of IEDs being used up to that point in the war.

- **Increase the size and power of IEDs to nullify the advantages of US and Coalition armor and find countermeasures to US jamming and other countermeasures:** In two separate instances in early January 2005, IEDs destroyed a Bradley Fighting Vehicle and an Abrams tank. The two vehicles are among the more heavily armored vehicles in the US arsenal. Prior to the two bombings, both the Abrams and the Bradley Fighting Vehicle had proven relatively effective in protecting troops inside. More generally, insurgents have learned to use vehicles with holes drilled in their floors to rapidly dig holes, and only emplace IEDs when they know convoys are on the way. They have learned simple radio control devices like garage door openers and cell phones are detectable and jammable. They have imported more sophisticated trigger devices, arm IEDS before convoys or vehicles are in line of sight, and use IR motion.
detectors and trip wires to detonate the IED when they are not present to be counterattacked. Alternatively, they have learned to use more than one IED, fire additional weapons after vehicles have halted to deal with the first attack, and sometimes “swarm” the vehicles under attack with rapid strikes with RPGs and automatic weapons. These attacks have become more lethal as insurgent fire has become more accurate, and they have learned to strike at vulnerable points in armored and up armored vehicles (like the windows of up armored Humvees.)

Simple camouflage methods are effective as well. Insurgents have used animal carcasses to hide IEDs, disguised them as rocks, or painted them with plaster to resemble a piece of concrete. They were also hidden in objects such as donkey carts, paint cans, trash bags, and plastic bottles. There were also reports of an IED found hidden inside the sleeve to an MRE package and a human leg armed with a pressure-switch bomb set to go off when it was picked up.

In Ramadi, insurgents set up mannequins armed with explosive devices either hoping that soldiers would think they were corpses and stop to check them, or just simply distract soldiers making them more vulnerable to attack.

US Soldiers also reported IEDs being laid in stages. One day a seemingly harmless piece of trash would be dropped on the ground, the next day explosives would be planted in it and the following day it would be armed. There were also reports of children as young as 12 or 13 years old emplacing IEDs.

Insurgents started using smaller devices in Baghdad, about the size of a coffee can, that were easier to place in a city atmosphere. They were not capable of destroying humvees, but were difficult to see and could wound or kill soldiers. The US military also said that they were impossible to jam.

**Attack convoys to force the US and Coalition to defend logistics and supply operations, hit a more vulnerable target, and disrupt US operations.** The GAO reported in February 2006, that, “the security environment in Iraq has led to severe restrictions on the movement of civilian staff around the country and reductions of a US presence at reconstruction sites,” according to US agency officials and contractors. For example, the Project Contracting Office reported in February 2006, the number of attacks on convoys and casualties had increased from 20 convoys attacked and 11 casualties in October 2005 to 33 convoys attacked and 34 casualties in January 2006. In another example, work at a wastewater plant in central Iraq was halted for approximately 2 months in early 2005 because insurgent threats drove away subcontractors and made the work too hazardous to perform. In the assistance provided to support the electoral process, U.S.-funded grantees and contractors also faced security restrictions that hampered their movements and limited the scope of their work. For example, IFES was not able to send its advisors to most of the governorate-level elections administration offices, which hampered training and operations at those facilities leading up to Iraq’s Election Day on January 30, 2005.

**Specialize and compartment operations, use isolation, affiliation, and “swarming.”** Insurgent groups have learned to create structures where leadership cadres are almost totally isolated from operations and communication, allowing them to focus on providing broad guidance and the propaganda and media struggle. Finance, planning, armorer, and pert operational groups are similarly isolated and physically separated from the leadership and each other. Specialized groups are created in larger organizations for IED operations, assassinations, even strikes focused on specialized groups like Shi’tite clergy. Other cells focus solely on surveillance, reconnaissance, transportation and safe houses. Suicide bomber groups are kept separate from those planning and arming the attacks and treated as expendable. Low level and low value cadres are expended in defensive operations or attacks, while higher value cadres disperse and seek to survive. Paid elements are used to avoid loss of cadre personnel.

Cell structures are deliberately kept loose, and direct command and communication minimized. Mission tasking replaces the kind of direct tasking and communication that the Coalition and Iraqi forces might detect. Affiliated groups and different mixes of cells may be brought in to “swarm” a given target or support a given operation, but the proliferation of different groups and elements helps ensure the survival of all insurgent groups by making it impossible to target a given set of cells and leaders.

What the military calls “low-level” insurgent cells, operate and attack in a specific region. But other more larger and hierarchical groups, many made up of former Iraqi military and intelligence officers, cover wider
areas and can organize larger attacks. There is evidence that the insurgency is increasingly able to conduct complex attacks. For example on January 24, 2006 in Ramadi, it took the combined forces of US marines working with Iraqi troops and supported by attack aircraft to defeat a series of coordinated insurgent attacks in broad daylight. The insurgents used weapons including mortars, small arms and RPGs. One such insurgent network, the Islamic Patriotism Movement numbered about 55 fighters and was associated with the larger Secret Islamic Army. Led by a former Iraqi intelligence officer named Abu Omar, known as the groups’ emir, he assigns operations and planning to his lieutenants, many who are former Republican Guard members. Each cell leader then has three to four cells consisting of three to four men apiece. Each man has a specific function: kidnapping; IEDs; support; intelligence, surveillance and reconnoissance.

The insurgents also use their own version of “swarming.” They use media coverage, key calendar events, and other forms of “open source” targeting and reporting on the effectiveness and impact of given attacks to know which strike have high profile, what methods of attack work, and the media and military impact of their actions. The proliferation of groups and cells, attack somewhat at random, but against high value targets in given place or time, of a given type, or simply in a constant stream of diverse attacks removes the need for coordination and complex C4I/BM operations, and allows a slow and uncoordinated tempo of operations to be effective.

- **Use “Swarming” techniques for attacks on vehicles:** The quality of urban and road ambushes improved strikingly in Iraq, as did the ability to set up rapid attacks, and exploit the vulnerability of soft skinned vehicles. Insurgents also learned to “swarm” coalition forces by rushing in from different points or firing simultaneously from multiple locations. In some cases, a single vehicle could take eight RPG rounds in a short encounter. Particularly in built-up areas, these tactics could kill or disable even heavy armor like the Abrams tank, and posed a major threat to lighter armored vehicles, as well as exposed infantry.

- **Use mixed attacks and sequential ambushes to attack military and emergency forces in follow-on attacks:** Iraqi insurgents steadily improved their ability to carry out complex attacks where an IED might be set off and then either more IEDs or other methods of attack would be used against rescuers and follow-on forces. Alternatively, an ambush might be used to lead US and Iraqi forces into an area with IEDs.

By the spring of 2005, insurgents increasingly used such mixed attacks to strike at US facilities. For example, they used a mix of gunmen, suicide car bombs, and a large fire truck filled with explosives to attack a US marine base at Camp Gannon at Husaybah near the Syrian border on April 11, 2005. On May 9, 2005, they used a hospital at Haditha as an ambush point, and then attacked the US forces that responded with suicide bombs once they are entered. This mix of unpredictable attacks, many slowly built up in ways difficult for US intelligence methods to detect, has greatly complicated the operations of US and Iraqi forces, although scarcely defeated them.

In 2005 IEDs were used to initiate an attack at a pre-selected location and were often followed on by small arms fire, mortar attacks, or more IEDs explosions as reinforcements attempted to arrive.

On April 2, an attack on Abu Ghraib was initiated with multiple car bombs against the entrance gates and then followed by mortar fire, rocket propelled grenades and small arms fire, which forced the Marines to abandon their positions. Reinforcements were struck by multiple IEDs on their way to the scene and encountered small arms fire. According to intelligence analysts, 12 coordinated attacks took place in under 30 minutes.

On June 20, an Army patrol interrupted a group of insurgents assembling mortars and machine guns for what appeared to be a large-scale attack against a commando compound with more than 100 fighters. In the large-scale chase that ensued, insurgents managed to detonate one suicide car bomb and a second went off as a result of the gunfire. IEDs and car bombs struck arriving reinforcements who then came under fire from nearby rooftops.

One intelligence officer with the 3rd Infantry Division characterized these attacks as “complex, professional-style attacks, militarily thought out, planned and resourced operations.”

A large-scale assault on an Iraqi prison in March of 2006 using combined arms, was an example of simple but effective planning and coordination amongst insurgents. Nearly 100 insurgents armed with automatic
rifles an RPGs stormed a jail in north Baghdad, killing 20 police and a courthouse guard in a prison break that freed 33 prisoners; 18 of whom had been captured in police raids just two days earlier. The assault left 10 attackers dead. They cut the telephone wires before they entered to prevent the police from calling for backup and detonated a series of roadside bombs as they fled to prevent a chase.\textsuperscript{1202}

The US military announced in September 2006 that insurgents were using a new tactic of detonating smaller bombs and subsequently detonating larger explosions when civilians and police arrived at the scene.\textsuperscript{1203}

- **Exploit the weaknesses in US, Coalition, and Iraqi combat and logistic vehicles:** The insurgents soon learned to target unarmored and lightly armored vehicles, and to hit at their weakness point. Deliberately or not, they learned this forced the US to use steadily heavier armor, disperse force to protect most movements, and pay the cost of trying to up armor and up arm everything from truck and Humvees to armored fighting vehicles like the Stryker. At the same time, insurgents learned how to place IEDs where they could kill many armored vehicles from below -- where their armor was lighter or less effective, and to use detonating devices that allowed remote triggering as armored vehicles passed above an IED or group of anti-tank mines.

- **Develop complex mixes and ambushes using small arms and light weapons like automatic weapons, RPGs and mortars:** At least through the spring of 2005, insurgents did not make effective use of looted guided anti-tank weapons, and had only been able to down one aircraft with man-portable surface to air missiles (MANPADS).\textsuperscript{1204} They did, however, steadily improve their tactics from single fire ambushes to multiple firings of RPGs against the same target, mixes of firing positions, and sequential fire points, ambushes, and defenses -- mixing small arms, RPGs, and light automatic weapons.

While much will depend on the level of insurgent and Islamist extremist access to arms, Iraq and Afghanistan have seen a steady improvement in the use of systems like mortars, anti-tank weapons, rockets, and timed explosives. It has also seen improvements in light weapons and the increasing use of armor piercing ammunition as a cheap way of attacking body armor, vehicles, and penetrating walls.

Insurgents have also used surface-to-air missiles such as the Russian-made SA-7 Grail to bring down at least one US Apache helicopter. One insurgent group with ties to Syrian intelligence was believed to have more than a dozen of these missiles. It was unclear where the SAMs originated.\textsuperscript{1205}

- **Import small “force multipliers”**: Rather than smuggle large numbers of arms, and create highly visible lines of supply, the insurgents imported devices like night vision systems, commercial communications, sniper rifles, and new forms of more sophisticated detonators.

- **Make effective use of snipers:** Iraqi insurgents initially had poor marksmanship and tended to fire off their weapons in sustained and poorly armed bursts. With time, however, some groups and cells not only developed effective snipers, but trained spotters, learned how to position and mix their snipers with other elements of Iraqi forces, and developed signals and other communications systems like them in tactical operations. Overall fire discipline and marksmanship remained poor through the late spring of 2005, but sniper elements became steadily more effective, and the overall quality of insurgent fire discipline and marksmanship was generally no worse than that of Iraqi soldiers, security personnel, and police. Snipers acquired new types of rifles, ant-armour ammunition, and body armor from outside Iraq, indicating they might have both support and training from Islamist extremists. Islamist web sites also began to include interactive sniper “training” data as a recruiting tool and crude training aid.\textsuperscript{1206}

Through November 2005, the Pentagon reported 2,100 American fatalities, 28 of which were killed by snipers.\textsuperscript{1207} According to John Morgan, a spokesperson for the US forces in Iraq, combat troops will not always report sniper deaths in efforts to impede insurgents from learning which attacks succeed.\textsuperscript{1208}

In late July 2006, US military intelligence uncovered Iraqi insurgent training material online that outlined sniper techniques for targeting US troops. The manual encouraged insurgents to aim for engineers, medics, and chaplains. According to the online document, “killing doctors and chaplains is suggested as a means of psychological warfare.”\textsuperscript{1209} To most effectively obstruct US military capabilities, the manual directed
insurgents to target US officers, tank drivers, and communications officers. Iraqi government forces were considered lower-priority targets that could be attacked by lower-grade combat brigades.\textsuperscript{1210}

Within Baghdad, the growing threat from both Sunni and Shi'ite snipers prompted a US response. An al-Qaeda video in October 2006 showed two US soldiers being shot by snipers. The footage was blurry, but the accuracy was obvious. The video was posted on a website used by the Mujahedeen Shura Council.\textsuperscript{1211}

The US military would not release data on sniper attacks at the time, but it was clear from news reports that there was an increased threat of snipers in Baghdad, and they were becoming more accurate. For example, a US airman was killed on October 14 by a sniper in the capital. The soldier was trying to keep civilians away from a possible bombsite when the sniper shot him in the back of the head from behind a building, proving the increased accuracy.\textsuperscript{1212}

The US military also declared the Shi'ite dominated area east of the Tigris a haven for sniper militiamen. A sniper shot a soldier as he traveled door-to-door talking with Iraqi civilians, trying to instill confidence in American forces. An intelligence officer operating next to Sadr City said, “It’s on my mind when I leave the wire. Snipers create fear. That’s the whole point of snipers. It’s about stopping us from talking to the people.” As a result of the increased sniper threat in the early fall, US units began patrolling in Bradley vehicles rather than more vulnerable humvees. Soldiers also learned to run through open areas and scan rooftops to avoid the more accurate gunmen.\textsuperscript{1213}

The US military caught a sniper during an operation in late October. The man had a high-powered scope, a video camera, and a hole in the trunk of his car so he could target US troops without being seen. To combat the sniper problem, the US military deployed counter sniper teams to search for snipers in neighborhoods that the troops knew well.\textsuperscript{1214}

In early November, the New York Times reported that the US military had held an internal conference about the sniper problem, but there seemed to be no easy tactical answer. US marines in Anbar province were struck by the sudden increased accuracy and frequency of sniper attacks. Marines noted that they rarely saw the elusive snipers and that most attacks seem to come when the marines are not engaged in active combat and from up to 300 away.

The Times article said that snipers often used long-barreled Dragunov rifles and hit on platforms, rooftops, and within cars. A general in Anbar said that insurgents began creating sniper training camps in the fall of 2006. He said, “We heard from some of our sources that the insurgents were going around with loudspeakers, saying that if you want to be a sniper we will pay you three times what your salary is now.” He also explained, “the sniper teams have a network of spotters, and that each time the marines leave their outpost, spotters hidden among the Iraqi population call the snipers and tell them where the marines are and what they are doing.”

Most of the time snipers only took one shot, which allowed them to get away quickly. They also tended to target marine radiomen. To combat the sniper problem, marine units began limited foot patrols during the day, and if they did leave their vehicles, they tried to quickly step inside homes and buildings to talk with residents rather than standing on the street. Soldiers also walked in zigzag lines and moved their heads up and down. Troops continued to patrol streets on foot at night because sniper technology had not achieved precision in the dark.\textsuperscript{1215}

- **Attack lines of communication (LOCs), rear area, and support activity:** Iraqi insurgents soon found that dispersed attacks on logistics and support forces often offer a higher chance of success than attacks on combat forces and defended sites, and make the Coalition fight wars based on “deep support” rather than “deep strikes” beyond the Forward Edge of Battle Areas (FEBA). In some cases, like the road from the Green Zone and central Baghdad to the airport, insurgents also chose routes that the Coalition and government forces could not avoid, where constant attacks both harassed operations and became a political statement and symbol of Iraq’s lack of security. These “ambush alleys” allowed the insurgents to force a major Iraqi or MNF defensive effort at relatively little cost.

- **Strike at highly visible targets with critical economic and infrastructure visibility:** Water and power facilities have a broad political, media, economic, and social impact. Striking at critical export-earning facilities like Iraq’s northern export pipeline from the Kirkuk oil fields to the IT-1A storage tanks near...
Beiji, where oil accumulates before it is pumped further north to Cheyhan, has sharply affected the government’s revenues, forced it to create special protection forces, and gained world attention.

- **Kill Iraqi elites and “soft targets”:** The insurgents soon found it was far easier to kill Iraqi officials and security personnel, and their family members, than Americans. They also found it was easier to kill mid-level officials than better-protected senior officials. In some areas, simply killing educated elites and/or their family members – doctors, professionals, etc. – could paralyze much of the nation building process, create a broad climate of insecurity, and force the US and Iraqi forces to disperse resources in defensive missions or simply have to stand aside and tolerate continued attacks.

- **Target elections, the political process and governance:** Elections and the local presence of government are soft, dispersed targets whose operation is critical to political legitimacy. Hitting these targets helps derail the political process, gets media visibility, offers vulnerable “low hanging fruit,” and intimidates the government and population in much wider areas than those subjected to direct attack.

In the run up to the October referendum, insurgents intensified their attacks upon political and infrastructure targets. Insurgents bombed a number of party offices, including those of the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Sunni Arab Iraqi Islamic Party. The latter was attacked after it urged its followers to vote in favor of the constitution.

Despite predictions of major violence, there are relatively few attacks by insurgents on the actual day of the referendum. Across the country, more than nine million Iraqis voted in 6,000 polling stations. Early estimates put voter turnout at 61% and only five of the capital’s 1,200 polling stations are attacked. However, incidents still occurred in spite of a halt to nearly all movement by non-military and non-governmental vehicles, and placing peak levels of Coalition and Iraqi security forces on duty.

- In Ramadi, US patrols clashed with insurgents in the early morning hours. Also in Ramadi, a roadside bomb kills five US soldiers and two Iraqi soldiers. Insurgents fired six mortar rounds at a sports hall being used as a polling center.
- A roadside bomb in Saqlawiyah killed a US Marine.
- South of Basra, gunmen attacked an empty polling station at 3 a.m., but were apprehended.
- In Baquba, a roadside bomb struck an Iraqi army and police convoy on patrol, killing three soldiers and wounding another three.
- In Baghdad, insurgents targeted five polling stations: A roadside bomb exploded early Saturday near a school polling station in the Amiriya neighborhood of western Baghdad, wounding two policemen. At 8:30 a.m., a rocket landed nearby a voting station in Azamiyah, northern Baghdad, injuring one civilian. Half an hour later, a mortar landed near a polling station in the Kazimiyah area. The mortar did not explode. Insurgents opened fire on a polling station in the Amil district of western Baghdad. Iraqi policemen returned fire, accidentally wounding three civilians on their way to vote. At midday, insurgents shot and killed a voter walking home from a polling station in western Baghdad.

As already discussed, insurgents stepped up their attacks against Iraqi politicians in preparation for the December 15 parliamentary elections. As part of pre-election violence, insurgents unleashed a wave of assassinations and kidnappings targeting candidates running in the elections as well as election workers. Attacks against party offices have also become common.

But as with the October referendum, violence on the day of the election was relatively light. Some of day’s violence included:

- Three separate attacks on polling stations in Mosul: at the first, a bomb killed one person; at another station, a grenade killed a school guard; a mortar attack on a third polling station did not cause any casualties however.
- In Tal Afar, a mortar shell killed one civilian outside a polling station.
- A bomb exploded in Ramadi.
• In Tikrit, a mortar round struck a polling station.

• A mortar attack injured one child in Baghdad. A second mortar attack (on a different polling station) caused no injuries.

• In Muqdadiyah, north of Baghdad, a bomb injured two election workers after security forces accidentally set it off while trying to defuse it.

• In Fallujah, a bomb was defused. US forces also reported defusing several bombs in other predominantly Sunni neighborhoods in the country.

• **Strike at major aid and government projects after completion; break up project efforts when they acquire visibility or have high levels of employment**: Insurgents and terrorists often simply struck at the most vulnerable projects, but they seem to have learned that timing their attacks, looting, sabotage, and intimidation to strike when projects are completed means the Coalition and government aid efforts have maximum cost with minimum effect. They struck at projects when the security forces protecting workers and aid teams were no longer there. This often led the local population to blame the Coalition or government for not keeping promises or providing the proper protection. Alternatively, breaking up project efforts when they began to have maximum local visibility and employment impact had many of the same effects.

• **Hit the softest element of Iraqi military, security, and police forces**: The insurgents found they could strike at men on leave, their families, recruits or those seeking to enlist, green troops and trainees, and low quality units with limited fear of effective retaliation. High profile mass killings got major media attention. Moreover, isolated forward elements in hostile or threatened areas not only were vulnerable, but successful attacks broke up governance, aid efforts, and intimidated local populations. This strategy has been most damaging to Iraqi police, which remain the weakest element in the security apparatus.

• **Create informal distributed networks for C4I—deliberately or accidentally**: Like drug dealers before them, Iraqi insurgent and Islamist extremists have learned enough about COMINT and SIGINT to stop using most vulnerable communications assets, and to bypass many – if not most – of the efforts to control cash flow and money transfers.

  The use of messengers, direct human contact, coded messages through the Internet, propaganda web pages, and more random methods of electronic communication are all cases in point. At the broader level, however, insurgents in Iraq seem to have adapted to having cells and elements operate with considerable autonomy, and by loosely linking their operations by using the media and reporting on the overall pattern of attacks to help determine the best methods and targets.

  Smuggling, drug sales, theft and looting, and direct fund transfers also largely bypass efforts to limit operations through controls on banking systems, charities, etc. Under these conditions, a lack of central control and cohesive structure may actually be an asset, allowing highly flexible operations with minimal vulnerability to roll-up and attack.

  The existence of parallel, non-competing groups of hostile non-state actors provide similar advantages and have the same impact. The fact that insurgent and Islamist extremist groups operate largely independently and use different tactics and target sets greatly complicates US operations and probably actually increases overall effectiveness.

• **Denying the Coalition and Iraqi government local victory**: The other side of the coin was that the insurgents found they could disperse and reinfiltrate into many towns and parts of cities the moment Coalition and combat-ready Iraqi elements left and deny the Iraqi government the ability to either deploy police or govern. Alternatively, bombings and sabotage could prevent or restrict the recovery of a town or area, and create a level of risk that meant many would not return or attempt to live a normal life. Even as late as November 2005, insurgents were able to capture large parts of Ramadi and exert control.

• **Street scouts and spotters**: Like many previous insurgent groups, Iraqi hostiles learned to have children, young men, and others use cell phones, signals, and runners to provide tactical scouting, intelligence, and warning in ways that proved very difficult to detect and halt.
• **Make cities and towns urban sanctuaries and defensive morasses:** Iraqi insurgents found that cities with supportive and/or accepting populations can be made into partial sanctuaries and centers for defensive fighting and ambushes, and that tactical defeat can normally be dealt with by dispersal and hiding among the civilian population. Such tactics work well in attacks on local authorities and security forces friendly to the US, efforts to block nation building at the local level, and efforts to exploit religion, ethnicity, tribalism, etc. Several cities in Al Anbar province have served as sanctuaries for militants. Insurgents typically leave the cities before a major US operation begins and return once the operation has ended.

• **Use neighboring states and border areas as partial sanctuaries:** While scarcely a new tactic, Iraqi insurgents have made increased use of cross border operations and taken advantage of the difficulties in securing the Syrian, Iranian, and Saudi borders. By March 2005, for example, these tactics had created a near sanctuary in the area along the Euphrates from Hit and Haditha toward Syria and through Ubaydi, Qaim, Karabilah, and Qusaybah to the Syrian border along the road to Abu Kamal. The Vietnamese used the same tactic in Cambodia and Laos, as have many other insurgent forces. The idea of securing a nation by securing the territory within its boundaries is often a tactical myth.

• **Create dispersed and rapidly mobile operations and centers, mixed with fixed “diehard” and “sleeper” installations.** The insurgents rapidly learned not to concentrate operatives and to keep them rapidly mobile. They mixed these with “die hard” facilities designed to fight and defend themselves and inflict casualties if attacked, and with sleeper cells and stay behind operations to recover after an area was attacked, captured, and “secured” by Coalition and Iraqi forces.

• **Exploit weaknesses in US human intelligence (HUMINT), battle damage assessment (BDA), and damage characterization capabilities:** Iraqi insurgents and other Islamist extremists learned that US intelligence is optimized around characterizing, counting, and targeting things, rather than people, and that the US has a poor capability to measure and characterize infantry and insurgent numbers, wounded, and casualties. They exploit these weaknesses in dispersal, conducting attacks, concealing the extent of losses, and manipulating the media by claiming civilian casualties and collateral damage.

• **Counter US advantages in intercepting satellite and cellular communications:** Insurgents utilize the text messaging function of cell phones to communicate in an effort to avoid electronic eavesdropping by the US. Insurgents will often use more than one phone to communicate a message, so that those listening in only hear part of the message.

• **Exploit slow Iraqi and US reaction times at the local tactical level, particularly in built up areas:** Learn to exploit the delays in US response efforts, and rigidities in US tactical C4I behavior, to attack quickly and disperse.

• **Exploit fixed Iraqi and US patterns of behavior:** Take advantage of any tendency to repeat tactics, security, movement patterns, and other behavior; find vulnerabilities and attack.

• **Hit at US HUMINT links and translators:** US dependence on Iraqi translators and intelligence sources is a key area of US vulnerability and one the insurgents have learned to focus on.

• **Use “resurgence” and re-infiltration – dig in, hide, and reemerge:** Disperse under pressure or when defeat seems likely. Let the US take an “empty” city or objective. “Resurge” when the US tactical presence declines.

• **Use incident frequencies, distribution of attacks and tactics that strain or defeat US intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (IS&R) assets and ability to support Iraqi forces:** Assets like RPVs, aircraft, SIGINT systems, etc. can provide significant capability *when they are available.* It is unclear whether it is deliberate or not, but the geographic spread and daily incident count in Iraq indicates that insurgent movements and actions often reach numbers too large to cover. In fact, the US averaged some 1,700-2,000 patrols per day during May 2004. While it is nice to talk about net-centric warfare, it is a lot harder to get a big enough net.

Insurgents learned that the US has less ability to track and characterize irregular forces, insurgent/terrorist teams, and urban and dispersed infantry than forces using mechanized weapons or significant numbers of...
vehicles. Blending into the civilian population has worked well for local insurgents and Islamists in both Afghanistan and Iraq, and Iraqi insurgents learned that they can exploit rules of engagement where the US and Iraqi government forces do not have soldiers or agents on the ground to perform targeting and IFF functions. As valuable as IS&R assets are, they do not provide some critical kinds of situational awareness with any reliability.

- **Choose a vulnerable Iraqi and US force:** Deny the US and Iraqi forces a large, cohesive enemy while attacking small or dispersed elements of US and Iraqi forces, facilities, or targets.

- **Counter US IS&R capabilities by adapting new techniques of communication and interaction:** The steady leakage of details on US and allied intelligence collection methods has led Islamist extremist and terrorist movements to make more use of couriers and direct financial transfer; use electronic communications more safely, find ways to communicate through the Internet that the US cannot target, disperse better, and improve their hierarchy and cell structure.

When this also meant developing low-tech methods of communication and signaling. In Ramadi, insurgents flew kites over areas patrolled by US troops to direct mortar fire and released pigeons to give away the location of Coalition forces. They also used codes announced through mosque loud speakers to signal an attack. Often calls for blood drives or announcements of funeral processions were actually coded signals to insurgents of troop locations. In more than one instance, elaborate funeral processions have been used to mask insurgent movement. The coffins, which carry guns and RPGs, are set down behind a wall where insurgents can arm themselves, then turn and fire on Coalition patrols.1217

- **Counter US and Iraqi government IS&R assets with superior HUMINT:** Developments in Iraq indicate that the US faces a repetition of its experience in Vietnam in the sense that as various insurgent factions organize, they steadily improve their intelligence and penetration of organizations like the CPA, CJTF-7, the Iraqi government and security forces, and the Iraqi factions backing nation building.

Like Vietnam, Iraq is a warning that hostile HUMINT sources are often pushed into providing data because of family ties, a fear of being on the losing side, direct and indirect threats, etc. In Iraq, it seems likely that family, clan, and ethnic loyalties have made many supposedly loyal Iraqis become at least part time sources, and that US vetting will often be little more than either a review of past ties or checks on the validity of data being provided. The end result may be an extremely high degree of transparency concerning US and Iraqi government operations. This will often provide excellent targeting data on key US and allied officials, events, etc. It can include leverage and blackmail, and vulnerability data, as well as warning of US and other military operations. Dual loyalty and HUMINT penetration of Iraqi security and military forces may be the rule, rather than the exception.

According to US military sources, insurgents had recruited Iraqi prostitutes and children to gather intelligence around the Green Zone in an effort to pinpoint vulnerabilities. Because women are not stopped and searched at checkpoints as frequently as men, insurgents increasingly used them to transport munitions. Prostitutes have been used to gain information from their customers about coalition operations and children, who mostly go about unnoticed, have been used to count vehicles and identify patterns in coalition patrols and schedules. It was suspected that this information is then passed to insurgent sympathizers within the Iraqi police forces who can enter and exit the zone without being searched.1218

- **Use the media, infiltrators/sympathizers, and ex-detainees for counterintelligence:** Constantly monitor the media and Internet for data on US and Iraqi intelligence, targeting, and operational data. Use infiltrators and sympathizers. Debrief released prisoners and detainees to learn what their capture and interrogation reveals about US and Iraqi intelligence efforts.

Iraq’s Interior Ministry alleged in March 2006 that 3,000 insurgents had infiltrated the security forces.1219

### Overall Patterns

In summary, the insurgency has evolved tactics that pose a major challenge to both the conventional war fighting superiority of US-dominated Coalition forces and the concepts such forces have had of swarming and adapting high technology systems to counterinsurgency and
counterterrorism. The insurgents have shown that low technology insurgent forces can, in some ways, be far more effective at "swarming" than high mobility, high technology, advanced IS&R forces.

This is not a new lesson. Many insurgent tactics are similar in many ways to the tactics used by other insurgent forces in dealing with conventional forces virtually since the beginning of war. Rather than some “fourth generation” concept, they stem back at least to the days of Sun Tzu, and many of the problems the Iraqi government and Coalition forces face as similar to those raised in modern, successful insurgencies like the Communist Chinese and Vietnamese:

- The Sunni part of insurgency has become the equivalent of a distributed network: a group of affiliated and unaffiliated movements with well-organized cells. There are at least three major groups of Islamist extremist insurgents, and while they are loosely affiliated in an informal “Majlis” created in 2005, they are virtually independent. They are difficult to attack and defeat on an individual basis because they do not have unitary or cohesive structure or a rigid hierarchy. The larger movements have leadership, planning, financing, and arming cadres kept carefully separate from most operational cells in the field. These cells have become increasingly specialized and compartmented to simplify training and retain expertise, as well as improve security. Accordingly, defeating a given cell, regional operation, or small organization does not defeat the insurgency although it can weaken it.

- The insurgency has developed a form of low technology "swarm" tactics that is superior to what the high technology Coalition and Iraqi forces have been able to find as a countermeasure. The insurgents have a natural advantage in terms of time and their tempo of operations because they are fighting a “long war” or war of attrition. They do need to respond to the pace of political and military events in Iraq, but they can still move much more slowly, “swarm” in cycles and episodically, and concentrate on highly vulnerable targets at the time of their choosing.

- The heavy use of IEDs, suicide bombings, short-term ambushes, and low-level killings and assassinations ensures that the exposure of insurgent forces is limited and only a minimal insurgent presence is needed. Concentrating on soft targets, remotely triggered IEDs and bombs, and carefully controlled ambushes reduces the profile that the Coalition can use for intelligence collection, and any exposure to Coalition and the more effective Iraqi forces units. “Swarming” in the form of steadily increasing numbers of IED and low-level attacks partially compensates for the relatively low success rate of many attacks.

- Media coverage, word of mouth, and penetration into Coalition and Iraqi government operations provides both intelligence and a good picture of what tactics work in military, political, and media terms. Movements can "swarm" slowly around targets of opportunity, and rely on open source reporting for much of their intelligence and knowledge of combat effectiveness. The Internet and infiltration from other nations gives them knowledge of what tactics work from other areas. The ability to "swarm" against vulnerable civil and military targets at the time of the insurgent's choosing, and focus on political and media effects sharply reduces the need to fight battles -- particularly if the odds are against the insurgents.

- The insurgency operates both above and below the level of Coalition and Iraqi conventional superiority. It avoids battles when it can, and prefers ambushes and IED attacks that strike at Coalition and Iraqi targets with either great superiority at the local level or through remote attacks using IEDs. It attacks vulnerable Iraqi and foreign civil targets using suicide bombings, kidnappings, assassinations, and other tactics in ways that the Coalition and Iraqi forces cannot anticipate or fully defend against.

- Insurgent groups take advantage of substantial popular support in some Sunni areas to disperse and hide among the population, forcing the Coalition and Iraqi forces to use tactics and detainments that often alienate the people in the areas where they attack or attempt to detain insurgents, while still allowing the insurgents to disperse and escape. These tactics deprive the Coalition and Iraqi forces of much of their ability to exploit superior weapons, IS&R assets, and conventional war fighting expertise, and use a countervailing strategy focused on Coalition and Iraqi government weaknesses. Coalition and Iraqi forces are adapting but are still often forced to fight the insurgency on the insurgency's terms.
• The insurgents have carefully studied the lessons of the “battle of Fallujah” in 2004. They realize that they do not benefit from major battles against Coalition forces and are too weak to take on Coalition-supported Iraqi forces in direct combat. Dispersal and concealment are essential parts of both survival tactics and swarming, as are efforts to wait out the presence of Coalition forces in areas where the insurgents have been pushed out or dispersed. The insurgents are often able to either force the Coalition to hold a “liberated” area indefinitely, or return when the Iraqi government and Iraqi forces prove unable to function effectively once Coalition forces withdraw. They can also exploit high unemployment and ethnic and sectarian tension when the government cannot put a Sunni face on its presence and the fact that the Iraqi police are generally unable to provide security unless Coalition or Iraqi army/special security forces are present.

• The insurgents attack above the level of Coalition and Iraqi conventional superiority by exploiting a diverse mix of past loyalty to the Ba’ath Party, Sunni sectarianism and fears of the loss of power and resources, Iraqi nationalism against foreign occupiers and Iraq “puppets,” and Islam against sectarianism. Its attacks are designed to wear down the Coalition forces through attrition and destroy their base of domestic political support. They are designed paralyze to the Iraqi government and force development effort, to prevent Iraqi Sunnis from joining the Iraqi forces and supporting the government, to provoke Shi’ite and Kurdish reactions that will further divide the country along ethnic and sectarian lines, and -- in some cases -- provoke a civil war that will both prevent Iraq emerging as a nation and divide in ways that will create a national and eventual regional struggle between neo-Salafi Islamic Puritanism and other Sunnis, Shi’ites, and secular voices. This political battle is more important to the success or failure of the insurgency than any aspect of the military battle.

• While some Sunni Islamist extremist groups have been so extreme that they have alienated the local Sunni population, or even provoked attacks by Iraq Sunnis, most have realized they need to moderate their words and actions to some degree and downplay foreign leadership and the role of foreigners. Zarqawi has either downplayed his role or been pushed somewhat to the sidelines. The leading “Emirs” are now said to be Iraqi, other leaders take on pseudonyms designed to at least make them seem Iraqi and propaganda is more focused on Iraq. Most Neo-Salafi groups now downplay their religious and ideological opposition to Shi’ites and other branches and voices within Islam, or avoid such charges entirely. At the same time, the various Sunni insurgent groups that are tied to the Ba’ath or more nationalist objectives have also become more religious, at least in terms of their public rhetoric. As in other insurgencies, finding the right public voice, and the mix of ideology and propaganda that provides public support, is an essential tool for both sustained operations and providing the popular base for “swarming.”

The problems such changes in insurgent tactics created for Coalition forces is that they often allowed insurgents to continue to fight below the threshold where US, British, and other Coalition forces could exploit their superior conventional weapons and technology. They kept casualties high enough to create a serious war of attrition and forced Coalition forces to spend at least several orders of magnitude more on countermeasures than the insurgents had to spend on new weapons and tactics.

The insurgents have also exploited the much greater vulnerability of Iraqi forces as a means of defeating the Coalition as well as the new Iraqi government. The effectiveness of these tactics has been greatly enhanced by Coalition mistakes. The US initially failed to provide minimal facilities and equipment such as body armor, communications and vehicles. While the US training teams and US commanders in the field made steadily better efforts to organize and train Iraqi forces to protect themselves, the US as a whole concentrated on manpower numbers and then left Iraqis out in the field to die.

The seriousness of this problem is all too clear when one considers the impact of less serious shortfalls in equipment for US forces. It is clear from the Congressional and media reaction to the discovery that the US was slow to up armor Humvees and trucks for its ground forces. At the same time, it is striking that the resulting debate over the equipment issued to US and Coalition
forces failed to ask what equipment was being provided to Iraqi forces although they had been a prime target of the insurgents and terrorists since late summer of 2003.
VII. Characterizing the Insurgency

Coalition and Iraqi forces must now deal with a complex mix of threats – which may broaden sharply if the country moves towards a more intense form of civil conflict. The key issues deciding whether the country does move towards civil war are whether the Sunni side is dividing, the nature and effectiveness of the various Sunni insurgent movements, the risk that the country will divide versus the prospects for unity, and the role that Shi’ite, Kurdish and foreign factions might play if the nation is plunged into a far more serious form of civil war.

**Summarizing the Course of the Insurgency**

The core Sunni insurgents suffered a series of significant and continuing tactical defeats since early 2004, notably in cities like Najaf, Baghdad, Samarra, Fallujah, and Mosul, but also increasingly in the “triangle of death,” Sunni triangle, and Iraqi-Syrian border areas. Iraqi forces have come to play a much more important role, and many insurgent leaders have been killed or captured. The death of Zarqawi in June 2006 followed the death of many key members of Al Qa'ida over the previous months, and was followed by further major successes in Baghdad and in other key areas of insurgent activity.

Nevertheless, the history of the fighting shows that Iraqi government and US attempts to root out the insurgency have so far had only a moderate impact, and that this situation is likely to continue or grow worse until an effective Iraqi government takes hold, a workable political compromise is developed between Iraq's main sects and factions, and Iraq forces become strong and independent enough to replace Coalition forces in most missions.

US and Iraqi efforts to thwart individual insurgent attacks have also sometimes been hollow victories. As one US Marine specializing in counterinsurgency in Iraq recently noted, “Seizing the components of suicide bombs (or IED making material) is like making drug seizures, comforting, but ultimately pointless. There will always be more. Both sides are still escalating to nowhere.” The fact also remains that securing Coalition areas and forces often simply drives insurgents and terrorists to attack Iraqis.

History reveals no tipping points and provides no guarantees against the prospect of either a long war at something approaching the current level of violence or a more intense civil conflict. While some US officers began to talk as early as the battle of Fallujah in November 2004 as a “tipping point,” many US experts were cautious even at the time. They felt the insurgents did lose a key sanctuary, suffered more than 1,000 killed, and lost significant numbers of prisoners and detainees. They also lost some significant leaders and cadres. Many insurgents and insurgent leaders seem to have left Fallujah before the fighting, however, and many others escaped.

The battles that have followed during the course of 2005 and 2006 have been less concentrated and less intensive, but almost continuous – mixed with raids, captures, and the sudden “swarming” of known and suspected insurgent headquarters and operational areas. Even cities that were supposedly liberated before the battle of Fallujah, like Samarra, have been the source of enough continuing attacks to force the redeployment of large numbers of Iraqi security and police forces and elements of key US counterinsurgency units like Task Force 1-26.

There have been continuing kidnappings and assassinations, and a constant campaign of intimidation, disappearances, and “mystery killings.” These have been mixed exceptionally bloody suicide bombings of Shi’ites and Kurds designed to provoke a civil war. While neither
MNSTC-I nor the Iraqi government have provided counts of insurgent killed and wounded, the figures almost certainly exceeded 3,000-5,000 between May 2003 and May 2005, and could be substantially higher.

Sunni insurgents have repeatedly shown since the battle of Fallujah that they can strike in ethnically mixed and Shi’ite-dominated cities like Baghdad, Tal Afar, Mosul and Basra, and occasionally in Kurdish areas. As a result, four of Iraq’s provinces – which include Baghdad and Mosul and some 43% of Iraq’s population -- continue to have a major insurgency threat and a major insurgent presence.

While the previous chronologies have not addressed the history of attacks on infrastructure in any detail, there has been continuing sabotage of key targets like Iraq’s oil facilities. In early January 2006, for example, the mere threat of insurgent attacks forced the shut down of the oil refinery in Baiji. Insurgents attacked and destroyed a convoy of 20 oil tanker trucks that were traveling between Baiji and Baghdad. The attackers launched two separate ambushes, one outside of Tikrit and the other outside of Mashahda, utilizing RPGs to destroy the convoy. These attacks, coupled with a temporary strike imposed by fearful tanker drivers and sabotage at a Baghdad refinery, led to a rise in the price of gasoline. Protests and hoarding were sporadically reported around the country.

**The Continuing Role of Outside Nations**

As is discussed later in this report, Iran and Syria continue to play a role in the insurgency. There have also been indications that some elements of the insurgency may be moving into other areas. In August 2005, for example, Saudi authorities announced that they had seized 682 Iraqis who tried to infiltrate Saudi territory in the first six months of the 2005. Interior ministry spokesman Brig. Gen. Mansour Turki stated that new security measures were being taken along the border with Iraq, including the erection of sand barricades, the deployment of heat sensors and cameras, and round-the-clock patrols. Still, according to Turki, the problem remaining is a lack of security measures on the Iraqi side. Aside from an 800-kilometer border with Saudi Arabia, porous borders with Jordan and Syria remain liabilities in combating foreign assistance to Iraq’s Sunni insurgency.

In mid 2005 reports began surfacing that al Qa’ida was preparing to send insurgents back to their own countries in order to carry out attacks there. In October, Iraqi Interior Minister Bayan Jabr announced that documents seized from Abu Azzam (a lieutenant of Zarqawi’s killed in September 2005) contained details about a plan to widen the insurgency beyond Iraq. Jabr told Reuters that prior to his death, Abu Azzam had written Zarqawi and asked him to “begin to move a number of Arab fighters to the countries they came from to transfer their experience in car bombings in Iraq” and that hundreds of fighters had already left Iraq for their homes.

In July 2005, the private Israeli research service Debkafile reported that al Qa’ida in Iraq was “diluting its Iraq force” and moving more than 1,000 of its operatives to Europe and countries in the Middle East in order to launch terror offensives there. The targeted countries were: Britain, Italy, France, Denmark, and Russia in Europe; and, in the Middle East, Egypt Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Israel. According to Debkafile the summer 2005 attacks in London and Sharm al Sheikh were the first of many attacks part of the new Al Qa’ida offensive.

Despite continued insurgent attacks, increased sectarian violence and the real possibility of civil war, administration officials emphasized that on balance, Iraq was making progress in fielding...
effective security forces, continuing economic development, and furthering the democratic progress through elections. US-Iraqi operations, it was emphasized, were preventing the insurgents from holding territory, and the Iraqi people had defied the insurgents by turning out in large percentages across sectarian and ethnic divides to participate in the political process.

Looking at Stability and Threats by Area

It is true that the main insurgent attacks are concentrated in 4-6 provinces, but this excludes ethnic violence on the edge of Kurdish controlled areas and Shi'ite violence in key cities like Basra. No province is yet fully safe from occasional attack, and the frequency and intensity of attacks have been only part of the story.

Various insurgent groups are still able to attack in other areas like Mosul, Ramadi, Samarra, Baquba, Balad, Beji, Tal Afar, and Hawija during the fighting in Fallujah, and seem to have planned to disperse and to shift their operations before the fighting in Fallujah began. The fighting in Mosul was particularly severe after the battle of Fallujah, and the US military reported a total of 130-140 attacks and incidents a day. While the Coalition and Iraqi forces did capture large numbers of weapons and supplies, few experts – if any – felt that the insurgents faced any near term supply problems given the numbers of weapons looted from Iraq’s vast arms depots during and after the fighting that brought down Saddam.

An MNF-I assessment issued in 2006 that broke down the progress made by each province in areas of governance, security and economics—the three focuses of the US National Strategy for Victory in Iraq—demonstrated that the future of Iraq was far from certain and highlighted some of the specific problems faced by the US and Iraqi governments in creating an independent and secure Iraqi state.

This assessment gave each province a status grade of “Critical,” “Serious”, “Moderate,” or “Stable.”

- Critical: Denotes a province that has a government that is not fully functioning or not formed, or that is only be[ing] represented by a single strong leader; an economy that does not have the infrastructure or government leadership to develop and is a significant contributor to instability; and, a security situation marked by high levels of AIF activity, assassinations and extremism.
- Serious: Denotes a province that has a government that is not fully formed or that is not capable of serving that needs of its populace; economic development is stagnant with high unemployment; and a security situation marked by routine AIF activity, assassinations and extremism.
- Moderate: Denotes a province that has a government that functions, but has areas of concern in area such as the ability to deliver services, the influence of sectarian elements, etc; an economy that is developing slowly, but in which unemployment is still a serious concern; and the security situation is under control, but where conditions exist that could quickly lead to instability.
- Stable: Denotes a province that has a fully functioning government; a strong economic development that supports job creation; and a semi-permissive security environment where local security forces maintain the rule of law.

The resulting assessment does not adequately portray the threat of civil violence, or the problems caused by local militias, but it does highlight the fact that the insurgency and security is directly linked to the success or failure of local governance and the local economy -- an issue increasingly stressed by senior US commanders in Iraq:

Muthanna Province: Moderate
• **Governance:** Rule of law is weak due to inadequate prison facilities. Understanding of roles within government structures needs emphasis. A very dominant Governor, but Provincial Council is able to function effectively.

• **Security:** ISF operate in a relatively permissive environment.

• **Economics:** Poorest province in Southern Iraq.

**Maysan Province: Moderate**

• **Governance:** Governance capacity is improving with DFID assistance; however, rule of law hindered due to a lack of adequate prison facilities

• **Security:** Large number of experienced local militia present. Camp Abu Naji experiences frequent IDF attacks and British patrols are frequently subject to harassing fire.

• **Economics:** Little capacity to jump start its economy.

**Kurdish Region: Stable**

• **Governance:** Stable government with close coordination between government and security forces. Rule of law established and functioning.

• **Security:** No significant AIF activity. Local security forces restraining crime and terrorism within the established legal system.

• **Economics:** Foreign investment increasing and overall level of economic development is sound.

**Ninawa Province: Serious**

• **Governance:** Governor is overshadowed by strong Kurdish Vice-Governor. Outdated laws hinder the performance of Provincial Council and members are unsure of their responsibility to their constituents.

• **Security:** Inter-ethnic violence and AIF activity remain high.

• **Economics:** High unemployment and poor infrastructure combine to depress economy.

**Tamim Province: Serious**

• **Governance:** Governor unofficially accountable to the Kurdish political parties. Provincial Council members have not fully grasped their duties and responsibilities. Deputy Governor position is unfilled due to deadlock between Arab and Turcoman blocs on the Provincial Council.

• **Security:** Inter-ethnic violence and suspicions of post-election tensions remain high.

• **Economics:** High unemployment. Requires private sector development and growth in agribusiness.

**Salah ad Din Province: Serious**

• **Governance:** Provincial government functioning but is weak in providing essential services.

• **Security:** Ongoing tribal conflict adds to relatively high level of tension within the province. AIF attacks against ISF remain a concern.

• **Economics:** Infrastructure unable to support economic development; Provincial Council has yet to develop a plan to address.

**Diyala Province: Serious**

• **Governance:** The top provincial offices are divided up between Shi’a, Sunnis and Kurds, leading to consistent infighting. Governor often makes decisions without consulting with the Council, but he is accountable to them for the decisions he makes. Rule of law requires continued emphasis.
• **Security:** Attacks of intimidation and assassinations continue nearly unabated, targeting ISF, PC and civilians.

• **Economics:** Economy continues to grow, but unemployment remains very high.

**Baghdad Province: Serious**

• **Governance:** Strong and growing influence of SCIRI party on the Provincial Council.

• **Security:** Assassinations and intimidation of public officials, ISF and civilians occur frequently. Criminal activity is a major contributor to the overall level of violence.

• **Economics:** High unemployment and weak infrastructure have hindered economic development. National Assembly interference in Provincial Council impedes its ability to act to improve economic growth.

**Anbar Province: Critical**

• **Governance:** The Governor is the dominant figure in all decision making and governance functions. Provincial Council has minimal control over Governor’s actions. IPS and courts system incapable of adequately supporting the rule of law. Significant intimidation of PC members.

• **Security:** Insurgent activity against ISF increasing; security situation is negatively impacting redevelopment efforts.

• **Economics:** Infrastructure incapable of supporting small business development. Little opportunity for growth.

**Babil Province: Moderate**

• **Governance:** Little transparency and accountability of provincial government. Governor very dominate in dealings with other members of Provincial Council. Strong Iranian influence apparent within Council. Provincial Council attempting to place party loyalist in Police Chief position.

• **Security:** Ethnic conflict in North Babil. The Provincial Council no longer claims responsibility for his area, claiming to have ceded it to Baghdad province. Crime is a major factor within the province.

• **Economics:** Infrastructure problems are affecting the growth of the private sector; unemployment remains high.

• **Najaf Province: Moderate**

• **Governance:** Iranian influence on provincial government of concern. However, government is capable of maintaining stability within the province and providing for the needs of its populace.

• **Security:** AIF activity reduced to a level that ISF can control without CF assistance. There is growing tension between Mahdi Militia and Badr Corps that could escalate. Recent targeting of CF resulted in 5 US deaths.

• **Economics:** Growth improving, but unemployment remains a concern at above 10%. Tourism offers a bright prospect for future growth.

**Karbala Province: Moderate**

• **Governance:** Government is functioning and improving. However, it appears to be increasing association with the Iranian Government. The local population is cognizant of the large presence of Iranians in Karbala and are concerned about their growing influence.

• **Security:** AIF activity reduced to a level that ISF can control without CF assistance. Suicide attacks are infrequent, but have occurred within the last 30 days, killing over 70 people in one event.

• **Economics:** Growth improving, but unemployment remains a concern at 10%.
Qadisiyah Province: Moderate

- **Governance:** Provincial Council ineffective at providing essential services; dominant Governor meddles in all areas of government; rule of law corrupted and bureaucratic.
- **Security:** Security situation is manageable by local ISF with some support from CF.
- **Economics:** Slowly improving economic picture; unemployment is biggest concern.

Wasit Province: Moderate

- **Governance:** Governor is weak and appears more interested in furthering his own and the DAVA party’s interest than in improving local government’s responsiveness to the people.
- **Security:** Manageable, but high level of smuggling activity and tensions between Badr Corps and JAM could lead to a worsening situation.
- **Economics:** Unemployment in the province remains high; economic development has not been addressed to the extent required.

Basrah Province: Serious

- **Governance:** Slowly getting started, the provincial government often attempts to assert its influence beyond its authority.
- **Security:** High level of militia activity including infiltration of local security forces. Smuggling and criminal activity continues unabated. Intimidation attacks and assassination are common.
- **Economics:** Unemployment in the province remains high; economic development hindered by weak government.

Dhi Qar Province: Moderate

- **Governance:** Sound governance processes and interaction between political parties. Require strengthening of lines of communication between various entities of Provincial government.
- **Security:** Strong JAM and OMS presence, but few significant attacks. CF experience occasional harassing attacks.
- **Economics:** A number of new enterprises have started, but unemployment remains a continuing problem.

**Shifts in the Character of the Insurgency**

The Bush Administration has gradually accepted the fact that it faces a very real insurgency with diverse elements that will take years to defeat. It still, however, tends to understate the level of the insurgent threat, and the broader risks it poses. The Administration characterized the insurgency as follows in the Department of Defense’s October 2005 quarterly report to Congress on the stability and security of Iraq: 1230

The insurgency is primarily a Sunni Arab phenomenon and is not a national movement; it has a very narrow base in the country. It continues to be comprised of semi-autonomous and fully autonomous groups with a variety of motivations. Measuring the strength of the insurgency in terms of numbers alone does not provide an adequate assessment of insurgent capabilities.

Insurgent numbers are a very small fraction of Iraq’s population. The vast majority of these groups are connected in some way through members belonging to social networks (e.g., familial, tribal, and former professional) that stretch across Iraq and beyond. Insurgents can also be grouped into several strands: terrorists and foreign fighters, “rejectionists” (mostly Sunni), Saddam loyalists, and criminals.
The main threat to achieving Iraqi control of and responsibility for security in provinces is, in the near and medium term, terrorists and foreign fighters because of the psychological impact on the population of their terror campaign, which appears to target Iraqi civilians indiscriminately.

… One noteworthy strategic indicator of progress in the security environment is the continued inability of insurgents to derail the political process and timelines. This is a key objective they are failing to achieve. As expected, there has been an increase in the average number of insurgent attacks during the period leading to the constitutional referendum. Insurgent attacks remain concentrated in four of Iraq’s eighteen provinces; half of the Iraqi population lives in areas that experience only six percent of all attacks. Six provinces reported a statistically insignificant number of attacks based on population size. Although about 80% of all attacks are directed against Coalition Forces, the Iraqi population suffers about 80% of all casualties.

…Iraqi rejectionists maintain a steady level of violence that complicates efforts to stabilize Iraq. Criminal elements and corruption often enable the insurgency. As noted, these several strands of the insurgency have failed to derail the political process, and their efforts to foment ethno-sectarian conflict have not been successful due in large part to key Iraqi figures calling for restraint among their communities.

Successful elections will not likely change the foreign fighters’ strategy. The Iraqi rejectionists – particularly those who are Sunni – may, nonetheless, lose some of their support base as the political process advances. Saddam loyalists may present a longer-term threat to building a democratic, prosperous Iraq because they remain focused on creating conditions in which they can disrupt and subvert the government.

Multi-National Force-Iraq operations in several of the areas most affected by the insurgency have combined with local commanders' engagement of local officials, tribes, and clerics. These operations have disrupted a number of key insurgent cells, limited their freedom of action, and maintained cooperation with influential local leaders in order to keep reconstruction and democracy building moving forward. A significant factor enabling progress against the insurgency is the dramatic increase in intelligence tips received from the population in the past several months, indicative of increasing popular rejection of the insurgents.

… Insurgent groups continue…to demonstrate an ability to adapt, relocate, regenerate, and sustain a campaign of intimidation against Iraqi officials, professionals, “collaborators with the coalition,” and religious figures.

The insurgency remains concentrated in Baghdad, Nineveh, al-Anbar, and Salah ad Din provinces. In these areas, the insurgency sustains a level of violence and casualties that can produce effects that include: maintaining a non-permissive environment that undermines local governance, emerging institutions, reconstruction efforts, and economic growth; inhibiting foreign investment and diplomatic representation; limiting the roles of non-governmental organizations and contractors; and increasing the costs of reconstruction.

Many aspects of this summary were correct at the time, but it did downplay the complexity of the Sunni insurgency, ignore the role of other factions in Iraq’s low-level civil war, and downplay the risk of a far more intense civil conflict.

**Characterizing the Insurgency in Early 2006**

The Department of Defense provided a similar characterization of the insurgency in its February 2006 quarterly report. It again stated that the insurgency was growing weaker and Iraq was moving towards unity.1231

…A noteworthy indicator of progress in the security environment has been the enemy’s inability to derail the political process and to foment large-scale ethno-sectarian violence.

Rejectionists, Saddamists, and Terrorists have failed to achieve their common operational objectives to:

- Derail the political process.

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• Foment large-scale ethno-sectarian violence
• Deter development of the Iraq Security Forces
• Damage Iraqi public trust in the Iraq Security Forces
• Expand the conflict regionally
• Widen their political support among the Iraqi people
• Force the premature disengagement of the Coalition

...Since the last report, some Sunni rejectionist groups recognized that not participating in the January 2005 elections was a strategic mistake. Even as they continued to use or condone violence, they attempted to advance their agendas through political means; they succeeded in convincing great numbers of their Sunni supporters to vote in the October referendum and in the December 2005 elections...It has also paved the way for separating those Sunnis willing to accept and work with the new Iraqi regime from those irrevocably committed to violent overthrow of the new Iraq and rule by the privileged and unelected few.

The report elaborated on the growing divide between al-Qa’ida and the more “nationalist” Sunni insurgents due in part to Zarqawi and affiliated organizations’ “overkill” attacks on Iraqi civilians:

...These developments put Sunni rejectionist groups at odds with Al-Qa’ida and its affiliates, which remain intractable and opposed to democracy. The September 14, 2005, Al-Qa’ida in Iraq declaration of “War on Shi’a” was the final wedge that split the bond between Al-Qa’ida, its affiliates, and the Sunni rejectionists. The November 2005 Amman, Jordan, bombing further alienated Iraqi Sunnis and regional Arabs who had given either overt or tacit support to the insurgency. The resulting fracture alters the dynamics of the insurgency in Iraq. Previously, the strategies of Sunni rejectionists, Al-Qa’ida, and its affiliates were largely complementary. Now, the two groups’ lines of operation are divergent and increasingly opposed.

...These developments – coupled with successful Coalition operations to disrupt terrorist networks in Ninawa and Anbar provinces – have combined to change the nature of the collective enemy forces, and, as a result, the overarching term ‘insurgency’ is less of a useful construct today. Previous synergy among enemy groups is breaking apart. Saddamists remain a potential long-term threat due to historical success in seizing power through infiltration and subversion although it is difficult to determine their current capabilities. Al-Qa’ida and its affiliates are moving into an increasingly isolated violent position, while Sunni Arabs appear to be moving toward increased political participation.

The February report did pay more attention to the risk of civil war. It stated that while this was a concern, sectarian conflict remained minimal and that the risk was often exaggerated:

...Terrorist groups have so far failed to create widespread sectarian conflict, despite this being a clear goal of some. Terrorist leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi has publicly advocated attacks that intensify sectarian tension and has “declared war” on the Shi’a. Al-Qa’ida in Iraq has killed thousands of Shi’a men, women, and children throughout the year in a series of bloody suicide attacks against mosques, markets, and other locations where Shi’a gather in large numbers. Ministry of Interior security units, which are majority Shi’a and Arab and which are suspected of being penetrated to some degree by Shi’a militias, have carried out attacks against and detention of Sunni Arabs that are suspected Ba’athists. Ethnic tensions also exist in northern Iraq between Kurds and ethnic minorities, including Turkomans, Assyrians, and Chaldeans.

The number of estimated sectarian incidents is low when compared to total attacks, but the brutal methods used and the media coverage of these incidents increase concerns that sectarian violence could escalate. Government power sharing, integration of ISF, and events such as the recent reconciliation conference in Cairo are just some of the initiatives underway to defuse sectarian tensions.

Classifying violence as ‘sectarian’ is frequently a matter of perception; it is often difficult to differentiate between attacks on citizens in general (including tribal and local vendettas, and pure criminal activity) and those specifically targeting members of a particular sect. To date, the level of sectarian violence has been sporadic, but ethno-sectarian attacks may increase in an effort to provoke reprisals. Iraqis may counter
violence with localized protection “militias,” discussed earlier. Positive statements from religious and political leaders will continue to help damped violent reactions to such provocations.

**Characterizing the Insurgency in Mid 2006**

The Department of Defense made significant changes in its assessment of the insurgency in its May 26, 2006 report to Congress. While many aspects of the report continued to understate the level of civil violence and the risk of civil war, the overview of the threats to Iraqi stability did go far beyond the Departments initial emphasis on terrorism, former regime loyalists, and the Sunni part of the insurgency.1232

*Sunni and Shi’a Rejectionists* who use "violence or coercion in an attempt to rid Iraq of Coalition forces... subvert emerging institutions and infiltrate and co-opt security and political organizations. Beyond this shared goal, Rejectionist groups diverge regarding long-term objectives. Rejectionists continue to employ a dual-track strategy in Iraq, attempting to leverage the political process to address their core concerns. Since the Samarra bombing, sectarian Rejectionist groups, including militant Shi’a militias, have increased attacks against rival sectarian groups and populations. Both Sunni and Shi’a Rejectionists have conducted reprisal ethno-sectarian attacks.

*Former Regime Loyalists*. Saddam loyalists are no longer considered a significant threat to the MNF-I end state and the Iraqi government. However, former regime members remain an important element involved in sustaining and enabling the violence in Iraq, using their former internal and external networks and military and intelligence expertise involving weapons and tactics. Saddamists are no longer relevant as a cohesive threat, having mostly splintered into Reactionists or terrorist and foreign fighters.

*Terrorists and Foreign Fighters*. Terrorists and foreign fighters, although far fewer in number than the Reactionists or former regime loyalists, conduct most of the high profile, high-casualty attacks and kidnappings. Many foreign fighters continue to arrive in Iraq via Syria... Al-Qa’ida in Iraq (AQI) is currently the dominant terrorist group in Iraq. They continue efforts to spark a self-sustaining cycle of ethno-sectarian violence in Iraq... AQI pursues four broad lines of operation: anti-MNF-I, antigovernment, anti-Shi’a, and external operations. Ansar al Sunna (AS) is another significant, mostly indigenous, terrorist group that shares some goals with AQI. Because of similar agendas, AQI and AS tend to cooperate on the tactical and operational levels. Most recently, there have been indications of cooperation between AQI and Reactionists as well. It is estimated that 90% of suicide attacks are carried out by AQI...The current positive effects of intolerance for Al-Qa’ida in Iraq (AQI) among Sunni Arabs may be limited if Sunnis perceive a lack of progress in reconciliation and government participation or if increased sectarian violence draws various Sunni insurgency elements closer. Local

*Militia Groups*. Militia groups help both maintain and undermine security in Iraq, as well as contribute to achieving the goals of their affiliated political parties. In many cases, these militias, whether authorized or not, provide protection for people and religious sites where the Iraqi police are perceived to be unable to provide adequate support. Sometimes they work with the Iraqi police. In some cases, they operate as a power base for militia leaders trying to advance their own agendas. Militia leaders influence the political process through intimidation and hope to gain influence with the Iraqi people through politically based social welfare programs. Militias often act extra-judicially via executions and political assassinations—primarily perpetrated by large, well-organized Shi’a militia groups and some small Sunni elements. Militias are also sometimes engaged in purely criminal activity, including extortion and kidnapping...Polling data indicate that most Iraqis agree that militias make Iraq a more dangerous place and should be disbanded...The most prominent militia groups are the Badr Organization—essentially the paramilitary wing of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, but technically its own political party now—and Shi’a cleric Moqtada al-Sadr’s Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM). The Kurdish Peshmerga is technically an "authorized armed force," rather than a militia. Shi’a militias have been involved in sectarian violence. Tactics employed by such militias have varied, including death squads, Sharia courts, and campaigns of intimidation. Shi’a militias, including the Badr Organization and Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM), have been accused of committing abuses against Sunni civilians, exacerbating sectarian tensions. In addition, JAM is implicated in much of the unrest that followed the February 22 Samarra mosque bombing. The Shi’a
militias receive arms and other support from Iran, reinforcing Sunni fears of Iranian domination and further elevating ethno-sectarian violence.

It was also clear that these outside threats were compounded by sectarian and ethnic divisions within the government of Iraqi forces which sometimes aid the Sunni insurgents and more often aid violent Shi’ite and Kurdish groups. Endemic corruption in the government, and crime throughout civil society, add a further mix of threats.

The risk of civil war did not diminish after the February 22 Askariya shrine attack. Several US military commanders and US officials in Baghdad made it clear in March 2005 that containing the civil conflict was now their primary concern. They acknowledged that the increase in sectarian violence in the weeks following the attacks was an even greater threat to US efforts in the country and the unity of the Iraqi state than the insurgency.

Ambassador Khalilzad warned that a major civil war remained a serious possibility. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld stated that Iraq “is not in civil war at the present time.” He did, however, admit the risk and summarize US policy plans for responding if civil war should break out: “The plan is to prevent a civil war, and to the extent one were to occur, to have the…Iraqi security forces deal with it to the extent they’re able to.”

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Peter Pace, characterized Iraq as “a place that is having some real difficulties right now.” He also gave a more balanced assessment that seemed to indicate that whether civil war occurred or not was a function of a collective Iraqi decision: “Everything is in place if they [Iraqis] want to have a civil war…everything is also in place if they want to have a united, unified future.”

General John Abizaid told a Senate committee, “There’s no doubt that the sectarian tensions are higher than we’ve seen, and it’s a great concern to all of us.” He added that the nature of the security situation in Iraq was changing “from insurgency toward sectarian violence.” He later clarified this in the context of the US mission in Iraq saying, “sectarian violence is a greater concern for us security-wise right now than the insurgency.”

Iraqi officials were even more frank. On March 19th, former Iraqi Prime Minister Allawi stated in a BBC interview that, "It is unfortunate that we are in civil war. We are losing each day as an average 50 to 60 people throughout the country, if not more...If this is not civil war, then God knows what civil war is." Allawi said the violence in the country was moving towards "the point of no return" and that Iraq was "in a terrible civil conflict."

That same day, President Talibani stated in another BBC interview that,

"I cannot deny the danger of it, but I don’t think that now it’s that serious. It was very close after the evidence of what happened in Samarra against these two holy shrines, but nowadays I think that it is far from (certain)...I am afraid of another Samarra, it would lead to some kind of clashes. What is very good and we can say it will be a big obstacle to civil war is the leaders of all parties and groups are against civil war, they are working towards calming down the streets and to bring the people together...People are feeling now that there are more sectarian problems, the life conditions are not so good, the levels of danger, many people are trying to leave the country

...I am optimistic because Iraqis have got no choice. There is no possibility of dividing Iraq. Take Kurdistan. Kurdistan cannot be independent while all the neighboring countries are against. Arabs of Iraq, Sunnis don’t want to separate Iraq they are dreaming to come back and rule the country. Shi’ites think that they are the majority, they think they have the right to rule the country for that there is no possibility for internally and also the international community and the regional governments are not permitting any kind
of division of Iraq. For that I am very optimistic that Iraq will remain, and if we can achieve as much as possible peace and security with democracy and federation we will have a strong and united Iraq.

The changes in the nature of the threat facing Coalition forces and Iraqis were reflected in the May report to Congress, issued by the Department of Defense: 1236

“Anti-government and anti-Coalition violence in Iraq derives from many separate elements, including Iraqi Rejectionists, former regime loyalists (including Saddamists), and terrorists, such as Al-Qa’ida in Iraq. Other violence comes from criminal activity and sectarian and inter-tribal violence. Each of these groups has divergent and often incompatible goals; however, some groups collaborate at the tactical and operational level. Enemy elements may engage in violence against one another as well as against the Coalition. Sectarian and inter-tribal violence may not target Coalition forces at all. Therefore, to categorize violence in Iraq a single insurgency or a unified “opposition” is both inaccurate and misleading…It is unlikely that the Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces will make progress against each of these violent factions at the same pace.”

The updated report was markedly different from its February predecessor in several of its assessments. Whereas in February the goals and operations of “rejectionists” and “Islamists” were “divergent and increasingly opposed,” the DoD now emphasized their resumed collusion. In addition, the Saddamists, once considered “a potential long-term threat,” were in May “no longer considered a significant threat.” Perhaps most importantly, while downplaying the possibility of civil war, the report nonetheless noted the increase in sectarian violence that it previously had relegated as a “matter of perception,” and now included Shi’ite militias as rejectionists, a category previously reserved for Sunnis.

Although the February report emphasized that the Zarqawi-declared “war” against Shi’ites was “the final wedge that split the bond between Al-Qa’ida, its affiliates, and the Sunni rejectionists,” the May report warned that the “current positive effects of intolerance for Al-Qa’ida in Iraq (AQI) among Sunni Arabs may be limited if Sunnis perceive a lack of progress in reconciliation and government participation of if increased sectarian violence draws various Sunni insurgency elements closer.” 1237

The report noted that despite the blurred lines between insurgents, terrorists and criminals, Sunni Arab insurgents remained the most organized and cohesive group and that terrorists and foreign fighters, even with low numbers, constituted the most serious and immediate threat to Iraq. 1238

While the DoD report states that “militia groups help both maintain and undermine security in Iraq,” it specifically identifies that these militias, and the sectarian divide in general as “an important challenge that has emerged in the recent period, in part because of the political vacuum caused by the delay in forming a new government.” 1239 Likewise, it acknowledges that militias have been involved in abductions and assassinations and that the loyalties of militia members incorporated in the security forces “probably still lie, to some extent, with their ethno-sectarian leaders.” 1240 It warns that violence by these militias, combined with the absence of effective security forces in many parts of Iraq, has caused many Sunni areas to form informal militias in order to provide for their own safety. 1241

In September, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy issued a report characterizing the diverse insurgent networks. The first of the four networks was based on kinship – tribal, clan, or family - ties between Sunnis. These networks were the most numerous in Iraq and include the Islamic Army in Iraq, the Army of Muhammad, the 1920 Revolution Brigades, and the Mujahidin Army. The second insurgent network was made up of terrorist and foreign fighter groups, such as al-Qa’ida in Iraq. Al-Qa’ida in Iraq adapted to the changing environment in the
country and succeeded in changing its composition to be almost solely Iraqi. The third network
was a smaller percentage of the insurgency and included Shi’ite groups. Finally, three
“metanetworks” emerged in Iraq, which were a method of coordinating similar insurgent
organizations: the Mujahidin Shura Council; the Coordination Department of the Jihad
Brigades; and the Mujahidin Central Command. The report said that these various networks were
almost impossible to defeat because of their ability to adapt to the changing environment in Iraq
and that a strategy limiting their ability to adjust would be necessary.1242

Characterizing the Insurgency During the Winter 2006/2007

Al-Qa’ida in Iraq and the umbrella organization, the Mujahedeen Shura Council, sought to unite
components of the Sunni insurgency in an apparent attempt to counteract the rise of organized
Shi’ite militias. The al-Qa’ida in Iraq bombing of the Shi’ite Samarra mosque in February 2006
was only the most visible symbol of the trend toward sectarian conflict that began in 2004. As
the trend became the norm in 2006, the fight of the insurgency gradually changed from one of
tactical victories against US led forces to one against other sectarian groups for control of
economic and political space. This evolution defined the “war after the war” and now involved
all Iraqis, whose choice to support sectarian groups would ultimately determine the outcome.

In the fall of 2006 the Sunni insurgency used the same tactics it had throughout the war. Sunni
residents in Baghdad, fearful of Shi’ite militias, relied on neighborhood gangs, insurgent groups,
and the US military for protection.

According to the August 2006 Department of Defense report on stability and security in Iraq,
Sunni Arabs did not form organized militias. The report expected support of extra-governmental
security forces to continue until Sunni Iraqis felt that the police and army were no longer
infiltrated by Shi’ite militias.1243

A World Public Opinion poll in early September found that fewer Sunnis supported attacks on
US soldiers than did in January. Al-Qa’ida in Iraq continued to operate out of Anbar Province in
strength under the leadership of Abu Ayyub al-Masri.

In a November 15, 2006 report to Congress, the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency
said, “The Sunni Arab-based insurgency has gained strength and capacity despite political
progress and security force developments. Nationwide, insurgents still conduct most attacks
against the Coalition and ISF and retain the resources, capabilities, and support to sustain high
levels of violence.”1244

The Washington Post reported that Sunnis formed neighborhood militias to protect themselves
from Shi’ite reprisal attacks following the large-scale bombing in Sadr City on November 24,
2006. Clerics from the Ghazaliya, Amiriyah and Adhamiya neighborhoods made joint
announcements to Sunnis: “Open fire toward any gunmen who enters the city, such as the Mahdi
Army, except the Americans, because they come to protect the people from the death squads and
guard the neighborhood.” The 25 volunteers to organize the neighborhood gangs were given AK-
47 rifles.1245 Sunnis were clearly preparing for reprisal attacks similar to those that occurred
following the bombing of the Shi’ite Samarra mosque in February.

The announcement from the Sunni Imams showed the change in Sunni perception of the US
military that occurred in 2006. After the Samarra mosque bombing US forces tried to protect
Sunnis from Shi’ite revenge killings, and Sunnis gradually found that the US military was not
collaborating the Shi’ite death squads. Since February 2006, Sunnis in Baghdad increasingly relied on the US military and loosely coordinated neighborhood death squads for protection. Sunnis in Baghdad had little or no faith in the Shi’ite led government and security forces, and many believed that they would be either killed or forced to relocate to Anbar Province if US forces withdrew.

The Los Angeles Times also reported on the growth of Sunni neighborhood gangs to counteract Shi’ite militias in the capital. None of the Sunni groups were as large or powerful as the Mahdi Army and they were far more loosely organized, but nonetheless there were a variety of options for Sunnis looking to take up arms.

In the neighborhood of Dora, a Sunni man decided to join former Ba’athists for protection and revenge. He summed up the sentiments of many Sunnis in Baghdad when he said, “We have zero trust in the Iraqi army and minus-zero trust in the police.” He said that the Ba’athists has organized after the reprisal attacks in the wake of the bombing of the Shi’ite shrine in Samarra. He estimated that in Dora there were between 400 and 500 organized fighters patrolling the streets and setting up checkpoints, but the total force loosely organized under the former Ba’athists included between 2,000 and 2,500 fighters organized in 50 man companies.

Neighborhood Sunni gangs had previously not worried US military officials because they were seen as taking primarily defensive measures and lacked the strength and political clout of the Shi’ite Mahdi Army and Badr Brigade. However, in the wake of the mass bombing attack in Sadr City on November 24, it appeared that some Sunni groups were coordinating with more powerful insurgents to prevent and revenge Shi’ite reprisal attacks.

A Sunni man in a western Baghdad neighborhood said that his neighborhood watch had formed in September and had fought the Mahdi Army the day after the Sadr City bombings. He said that his 100-man force included former Ba’athists and intelligence officials and guarded about 500 Sunni homes. However, he added, “The mujahedin are helping us. Today two cars with gunmen came from Abu Ghraib to help us defend our mosques and our area from militia attacks.”

More closely organized and coordinated Sunni death squads would clearly mean more volatile and larger scale encounters with Shi’ite militias and full-scale civil war.

The Washington Times reported that Sunni fighters from various groups were trying to form alliances in an attempt to counteract the power of the Shi’ite Mahdi Army. However, Sunni insurgents and neighborhood gangs were so diverse and numerous it seemed unlikely that any cohesive alliance could form.

The August-September Stability and Security Report by the Department of Defense discussed Sunni insurgents and armed groups:

- Sunni terrorist organizations, such as al-Qaeda in Iraq and Ansar al-Sunnah, are engaged in a religiously motivated conflict to end “foreign occupation” and to marginalize the Shi’a.
- High profile terrorist attacks are most often attributed to al-Qaeda in Iraq, whose goals include instigating sectarian violence. Al-Qaeda in Iraq and the affiliated Mujahadeen Shura Council consist of both foreigners and Iraqis motivated by an extremist Sunni Islamic ideology and seek to establish an Islamic Caliphate in Iraq. The emergence of Abu Ayub al-Masri as leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq demonstrated its flexibility and depth, as well as its reliance on non-Iraqis. Al-Masri benefited from detailed knowledge of former al-Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi’s planning as well as his own extensive operational experience, allowing him to carry forward many of his predecessor’s existing strategies. Al-Masri has attempted to set the tone for the Iraqi jihad and to solidify the perception of continued strong leadership within al-Qaeda in...
Iraq. Since al-Masri assumed leadership, al-Qaeda in Iraq has continued its main strategy of instigating sectarian violence using high profile attacks against Shi’a civilians.

- Ansar al-Sunnah is a mostly indigenous terrorist group with similar goals. However, Ansar al-Sunnah objects to al-Qaeda in Iraq’s indiscriminate targeting of Iraqis.

- The New Ba’ath Party, the 1920 Revolutionary Brigade, and Jaysh Muhammad are the most prominent Sunni Rejectionist groups. To date, Sunni Rejectionists – also known as the Sunni Resistance – have exhibited limited interest in Prime Minister Maliki’s National Reconciliation and Dialogue Project. These groups attack Coalition and Iraqi forces to try and get Coalition forces to withdraw and to regain a privileged status in a Sunni dominated Iraq. Sunni Rejectionists target Coalition forces at higher rates than Shi’a militia groups do. Most of the Rejectionist insurgents will probably continue attacking Coalition forces as long as the Coalition remains in Iraq, and the Rejectionists are likely to increase attacks against Shi’a dominated ISF as they assume greater responsibility…

- Sunni Arabs do not have a formally organized, national level militia. Sunni, especially in heavily mixed areas like Baghdad, rely on neighborhood watches and other local armed elements to provide security in neighborhoods and areas where they perceive Iraqi institutions and forces are unwilling or unable to meet security requirements. Attacks on the Sunni population by Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM), and the presence of Ba’ath Organization and JAM members in the Iraqi Police Service and the National Police, contribute to Sunni concerns about persecution. High levels of sectarian violence are driving some Sunni neighborhood watch organization in Baghdad to transform into militias with limited offensive capabilities.

A Crisis Group report also summarized the effect of such changes in a similar way:1249

Having established a fertile haven in Iraq, jihadism has been metastasizing and spreading. Much as, at the outset, so-called Arab Afghans such as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi helped import jihadism to Iraq, insurgent skills, methods and discourse are now being developed in and exported out of Iraq. Suicide attacks or the use of more sophisticated improvised explosive devises are known to have made their way to Afghanistan. It is not so much that Iraq harbors insurgent training camps, although the armed opposition claims that to be the case. Rather, the war gave insurgents the opportunity to elaborate relatively sophisticated military doctrines, more flexible, effective and capable of being adapted to other conflict zones. Actively engaged in propaganda and proselytisation, the armed groups have set up highly developed means of communication that are being duplicated elsewhere. Moreover, the various transnational networks once formed to bolster the jihadi insurgency in Iraq – involving the transfer of both funds and fighters – are now operating in reverse direction, presenting a serious threat to neighboring countries.

The Pentagon’s November Report was the first DoD report that acknowledged the effect of Shi’ite militia infiltration into ISF on Sunnis. Although Sunni insurgents seen since 2003 – such as al-Qa’ida in Iraq and Ansar al-Sunna – still constituted the majority of attacks against Coalition forces at the end of 2006, the November DoD report showed how sectarian violence in Baghdad was forcing previously unaligned Sunnis to take up arms to protect their families and neighborhoods.

Al-Qa’ida in Iraq and the umbrella organization, the Mujahdeen Shura Council, sought to unite components of the Sunni insurgency in an apparent attempt to counteract the rise of organized Shi’ite militias. The al-Qa’ida in Iraq bombing of the Shi’ite Samarra mosque in February 2006 was only the most visible symbol of the trend toward sectarian conflict that began in 2004. As the trend became the norm in 2006, the fight of the insurgency gradually changed from one of tactical victories against US led forces to one against other sectarian groups for control of economic and political space. This evolution defined the “war after the war” and now involved all Iraqis, whose choice to support sectarian groups would ultimately determine the outcome.

During 2006, al-Qa’ida in Iraq absorbed ten additional Sunni armed groups, according to a report published in the New York Times. These groups also joined the ‘Islamic State of Iraq’ – the eight
province autonomous region declared by the al-Qa’ida dominated Mujahedeen Shura Council. Some of the groups that joined the Mujahedeen Shura Council and Islamic State in 2006 included the Society of True Believers, Supporters of Monotheism and Our Creed, the Knights of Monotheism, the Army of the Abrahamic Tradition, the Army of the Prophet’s Companions, and the Army of the Conquerors, which broke from the Islamic Army in Iraq.

The report also noted the loose affiliations to the al-Qa’ida network of the Islamic Army in Iraq, the Mujahedeen Army, and the Ansar al-Sunna Army. In September, members from the Mujahedeen Shura Council and Ansar al-Sunna met, indicating that some level of coordination began taking place between the two groups. Al-Qa’ida in Iraq also announced that the 1920 Revolutionary Brigades – which previously avoided sectarian conflict – joined the Islamic State of Iraq.

These developments in the larger al-Qa’ida network in 2006 – most of which occurred after the death of al-Zarqawi - indicated that al-Qa’ida in Iraqi sought to unify the insurgency. Attacks by those groups affiliated with the Mujahedeen Shura Council continued to target US troops, but also took on a distinctly sectarian element.

Increased alliance between insurgent groups seemed to strengthen the insurgency at the end of 2006 and into 2007. If Abu Ayub al-Masri – leader of al-Qa’ida in Iraq - and Abu Omar al-Baghdadi – emir of the Islamic State of Iraq – could successfully unite the vast number of insurgent groups 2007 would most likely see a rise in coordinated large-scale attacks typical of al-Qa’ida against coalition troops and Iraqi Shi’ites, but more importantly, widespread support from the Sunni community. Sunni insurgent leaders clearly saw a united effort as vital in retaliating against attacks by the largest Shi’ite militia, al-Sadr’s Mahdi Army.

Insurgents continued to use tactics that had worked well throughout the war: mass kidnappings, mass bombings, kidnappings of Iraqi professionals/government workers, targeting Iraqi security forces, and body dumps. At the same time they adapted their tactics to stay one step ahead of US-led forces. The urban warfare of Baghdad was a haven for snipers and hidden IEDs. It was these shifting tactics that US and Iraqi forces found so difficult to anticipate and prevent.

Such tactical battles with US or Shi’ite controlled security forces, however, were only a means to an end. The Sunni insurrgents, like the armed groups from other sects, were fighting for control of the population. Their goal was to gain control of political and economic space. The growth of the Mujahedeen Shura Council, and more prolific support for an “Islamic State of Iraq”, indicated that the insurgency recognized the importance of gaining the political and economic support of Sunni tribes across the country.

Anbar Province clearly maintained a Sunni majority, fueled in part by the mass arrival of Sunni refugees pushed out of Baghdad and southern Iraq by soft sectarian cleansing, but Baghdad, Kirkuk, Mosul, and large sections of Diyala Province were ethnically diverse and highly contested. The future success of the Sunni insurgency relied on its ability to gain the support of large numbers of Sunnis in these areas and to provide local security and economic incentives.

Al-Qa’ida’s internet addresses steadily attacked all Sunni efforts at compromise and conciliation. Second in command of Al-Qa’ida al-Zawahiri said in a late December video address:

I tell Republicans and Democrats alike that you are frantically looking for a way out of the disasters surrounding you in Iraq and Afghanistan. You insist on the same stupid mentality. You try to negotiate with some parties in the hope that they might secure your departure, but these parties do not have an escape
route to offer you, and your attempts will only generate more disappointment, God willing, because you are not negotiating with the real powers in the Islamic world. It seems you will endure a painful journey of failed negotiations, only to be forced to turn back and negotiate with the real powers.

In an internet video in late 2006 Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, the proclaimed emir of the Islamic State of Iraq created by al-Qa’ida allied forces in the fall, stated that 70% of tribal sheiks aligned themselves with the Islamic State. Baghdadi invited former members of the old Iraqi Army to join his forces to fight against the “occupation”; the call came only a week after Prime Minister Maliki invited ex-Ba’athist army members to join the new security forces. Any old army member under the rank of major was eligible if he could recite passages form the Koran and pass a test on Islamic law.

Baghdadi told Sunnis to continue opposing the rule in Baghdad and the government’s attempts at reconciliation with Sunnis. The video clip also stated that governors had been appointed in Sunni dominated areas and that Islamic law was imposed at the “request of the people themselves.” If Baghdadi’s projections about the popularity of the Islamic State of Iraq were accurate, it appeared Sunni opposition groups and al-Qa’ida supporters were more closely aligned under the leadership of al-Masri than they had been under Zarqawi, and presented a new threat to US operations in Sunni dominated and contested areas.1252

**The Propaganda War**

A Crisis Group report in late December commented on insurgent use of propaganda as a tactic. The report said, “The armed opposition has focused its propaganda on crimes committed against Sunni Arabs, thereby encouraging a siege mentality and promoting its own role as protector of the oppressed population.”

In early January *Newsweek* also reported on the success of the insurgency’s propaganda war, as opposed to that waged by the US. A TV station, Zawra, became one of the most popular stations among Sunnis, even among some Shi’ites. Zawra regularly showed footage of attacks against US troops and encouraged Iraqis to attack occupation forces. Some US military officials believed that insurgents attacked troops in some cases just to get footage.

The internet, TV, and cell phones made it much easier for insurgents to disseminate their propaganda against coalition forces. Most large scale attacks were filmed by sophisticated technology and insurgents edited the tapes to confirm hostile stereotypes about US forces. The US military response, however, stuck to traditional propaganda channels such as press releases, which were outdated and not viewed by many Iraqis.

The Sunni insurgents used Saddam Hussein’s execution to try to rally Sunnis throughout the country and the Arab world. Insurgents sought to gather popular support to change the main street name in Falluja – where the US pledged millions for the ‘hearts and minds’ campaign – to the ‘Martyr Saddam Hussein’.1254

On January 21 gunmen attacked the provincial governor’s office in Karbala, south of Baghdad. The insurgents wore American military uniforms and flak jackets and had US military weapons and SUVs. Insurgents regularly acquired ISF uniforms and vehicles, but had never so effectively disguised themselves as US troops.1255

**The War for Economic Space**
As with Shi’ite militia tactics, the number of bombings or IED attacks by Sunni insurgents was only part of the larger and more important picture of control of political and economic space. The more unified insurgency and the “Islamic State” had the potential to gain the support of the broader Sunni community. Continued intimidation campaigns against Sunnis who complied with US forces or the Shi’ite government and a lack of employment opportunities also maintained the undrainable swamp of young Sunni recruits. Moderate Sunnis increasingly saw the Shi’ite led government as unwilling to compromise with Sunnis on any issues, and therefore were swayed to give their economic and political support to the insurgency.

The insurgents also tailored their economic attacks to encourage the conditions for civil war. In the last six months of 2006, insurgents succeeded in their tactic of electrically isolating Baghdad, according to a New York Times report. Insurgents attacked towers in the deserts to the north and south of the capital, where they could easily kill repair crews. The attacks were particularly devastating because they brought almost all the power to Baghdad from the energy rich north and south. Looters also removed much of the valuable steel and aluminum from the towers and sold it on the black market – making repairs even more difficult.

Electricity officials said that in March 2006 only one or two lines were down, but by summer that number had risen to six or seven. The most devastating attack came on 6 July when insurgents targeted all the lines at the same time, and the government was unable to reverse the damage.

The typical insurgent strategy was to explode the four support joints on a single down, which would bring down three others when it fell. On 17 December insurgents downed 40 towers running into Baghdad from the power plant in Beiji and 42 more connecting Beiji to Kirkuk.

The Iraqi electricity minister said, “Now Baghdad is almost isolated. We almost don’t have any power coming from outside.” He stated that seven of nine lines supplying Baghdad were down due to insurgent attacks and lack of repairs. He also could not think of any cause in which the insurgents had been caught. The ministry had tried to make monetary arrangements with tribes in return for security of the lines, but they had all been ineffective.

The Regional, Sectarian, and Ethnic Nature of the Insurgency

The most violent core of the insurgency is driven by a minority of Sunni Arabs. As the previous chapters have shown, is not a national insurgency although it has succeeded in provoking a growing level of sectarian and ethnic violence. Iraqi Kurds have never supported it, and only small numbers of Shi’ites have taken an active role. It has been driven by a relatively small part of Iraq’s Sunni population concentrated in part of the country, and many of its most violent actions have been led by a cadre of foreign volunteers and extremists which did not seem likely to exceed 3,000 full time insurgents as of September 2005.

Although there are no accurate census data for Iraq, the Arab Sunni population may only be around 15-20% of Iraq’s total population. Such estimates are, however, uncertain. The CIA placed Iraq’s population at 26,074,906 as of July 2005. The CIA estimated in January 2006 that Iraq’s population was 75-80% Arab, 15%-20% Kurdish, and 5% Turkoman, Assyrian or other. It estimated that the sectarian split in the entire population was 97% Muslim (Shi’a 60%-65%, Sunni 32%-37%), and 3% Christian. This estimate by Muslim sect, however, included the 20%-25% of the population that was not Arab, and not just Arab Sunnis. It is unclear if any
accurate figure exists for the number and percentage of Sunni Arabs, although election registrations to date would put in close to the 20% figure.

Map V.1 shows a rough estimate of the distribution of sects and ethnicities across Iraq’s governates.
As Figures V.1 and V.2 show, more than 80% of all attacks have consistently occurred in only four provinces, although they are home to some 42% of the population. Its main base has been Al Anbar province and a relatively limited number of towns and small cities in the West. If one only considers the hard-core Sunni insurgent areas in Western Iraq, they probably only have about 6-8% of Iraq’s total population.1257
Figure V.1: The Regional and Sectarian Nature of the Fighting, Total Attacks by Province:
August 29-September 16, 2005

These four provinces have less than 42% of the population but account for 85% of all attacks.

These twelve provinces account for 50% of the population but only 6% of attacks.

Figure V.2: Regional and Sectarian Nature of the Fighting, Daily Attacks by Province: August 29, 2005-January 20, 2006


Note: Actual numbers are estimates based on data provided in the report.
Estimates of Total Insurgent Forces

Estimates of the size of the insurgency have varied widely since the struggle first became serious in August 2003. Much depends on the definition of insurgent and the level of activity and dedication involved, and virtually every intelligence source that has such estimates has made it clear that any figures for the total manning of insurgent forces are little more than "guesstimates."

The Coalition was slow to make such “guesstimates” even marginally realistic. US officials kept repeating estimates of total insurgent strengths of 5,000 from roughly the fall of 2003 through the summer of 2004. In October, they raised their estimates to a range of 12,000 to 16,000 but have never defined how many are hard-core and full time, and how many are part time. As has been discussed earlier, estimates as divergent as 3,500 and 400,000 were being cited in the spring and early summer of 2005.1258

US and Iraqi officials have, however, that been consistently careful to note that they are uncertain as to whether the numbers are increasing or decreasing with time as a result of US and Iraqi operations versus increases in political and other tensions that lead Iraqi Arab Sunnis to join the insurgents. There is no evidence that the number of insurgents is declining as a result of Coalition and Iraqi attacks to date. US experts stated in the spring of 2005 that they had no evidence of a decline in insurgent numbers in spite of large numbers of kills and captures since the summer of 2004.

In fact, according to the Ministry of Human Rights, at the end of February 2006 there were a total of 29,565 detainees, 14, 229 of which were in MNF-I custody. The Ministry of Justice held 8,391 of these, 5,997 were held by the Ministry of Interior, 460 by the Ministry of Defense and 488 juveniles were held by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. Nonetheless, attacks still persisted.1259

US experts also caution that much depends on how insurgents are defined and counted: core, full time, part time, sympathizers, etc. They also note that almost all counts only include men although women do play an active role in support functions, and a number of insurgent groups operate in a family environment, rather than as isolated groups of men. Mixing active insurgents with families both provides support in ways that free male insurgents to act, and provides protective cover which can be used to charge that Coalition and Iraqi forces abusing civilians when insurgent cells and facilities are attacked.

This explains why a few outlying estimates were still as low as 3,500 full-time actives making up the “core” forces in 2005. Most US military estimates range between 8,000 and 18,000, perhaps reaching over 20,000 when the ranks swell for major operations. Iraqi intelligence officials, on the other hand, have sometimes issued figures for the total number of Iraqi sympathizers and insurgents as high as 200,000, with a core of anywhere between 15,000 and 40,000 fighters and another 160,000 supporters.

Newsweek quoted US sources as putting the total of insurgents at 12,000-20,000 in late June 2005. Another US expert was quoted as saying it had some 1,000 foreign jihadists, 500 Iraqi jihadists, 15,000-30,000 former regime elements, and some 400,000 auxiliaries and support personnel.1260 Throughout 2005, the numbers put forth publicly fluctuated between 15,000-20,000 for the total number of insurgents. Near the fall of 2005, estimates of foreign insurgents were between 700 and 2,000. That estimate stayed consistent into 2006.1261
The true figure may well fall somewhere with this range of different figures, but the exact number is largely irrelevant. There is no single meaningful definition of the term. There are many different kinds of “insurgents”: cadres, full time, part time, sympathizers, collaborators and those who passively tolerate their actions.

Insurgent leaders, cell group leaders, cell leaders, and experts determine success or failure. In spite of many killings and arrests, these cadres have become steadily more experienced, adapting tactics and methods of attack as fast as the Coalition can counter them. They have also developed networks with some form of central command, planning, and financing. These are the numbers that are truly important, but no one has made a meaningful unclassified estimate of this aspect of insurgent strength.

Furthermore, the ability of insurgents to find replacements is as critical as their current numbers at any given time. US officers have repeatedly commented on the resiliency of the insurgency. Col. Ed Cardon said, “One thing that has really surprised us is the enemy’s ability to regenerate, we take a lot of people off the streets, but they can regenerate very rapidly. The insurgent networks are complex, [and] diffuse. We can take out the leadership, but it doesn’t take long for them to grow new legs.”

Much depends on whether the insurgency continues to enjoy enough popular sympathy among Sunnis and others to continue to fight, and whether the violence of Sunni Islamist extremist groups can paralyze efforts at inclusiveness and national unity, or even trigger civil war. In practice, suicide bombings by small groups of such extremists may be far more dangerous than the lower levels of violence by larger mainstream Ba’athist or Sunni groups.

In early June 2006, US officials and the Iraqi government reached an agreement to begin releasing what was planned to amount to 2,500 detainees by the end of the month. As of April 30, 2006, the Ministry of Human Rights reported that there were a total of 287,700 detainees held in Iraqi and American prisons across the country – 15, 387 in the custody of the multinational forces; 7,727 held by the Ministry of Justice; 176 juveniles held by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs; 5,077 held by the Ministry of Interior and 333 by the Ministry of Defense.

The scheduled release of detainees was part of al-Maliki’s “national reconciliation campaign” in order to gain support of the Sunni minority. “We are ready to turn a new page with those who so desire it, and we will respond with force to those who want to pursue violence,” the Prime Minister said. Those who were scheduled for release were considered to be a lower threat and according to a US spokesman, had not committed any serious crimes such as “bombings, torture, kidnapping and murder.”

As planned, on June 15, US and Iraqi forces released a third group of 430 detainees. Deputy Prime Minister Salam Zikam Ali al-Zubaie congratulated the inmates leaving the Abu Ghraib detention center, saying “They were released for the sake of peace, for the sake of putting an end to violence and heading towards construction and peace together.”

The Iraqi Insurgency vs. Other Insurgencies

One can only speculate on how the strength Iraqi insurgency compares with that of other modern insurgencies. In August 2005, US Gen. John Abizaid, head of Central Command, estimated that
the insurgency was only 20,000 strong, and that it could be even less than that. This number amounted to less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the Iraqi population.

Figure V.3 displays data on seven twentieth century insurgencies analyzed in a 1963 government-sponsored report by Andrew Molnar. The figure shows the percentage of the total population represented by each respective insurgency. The average number is about 2.4 percent, well above the 0.1 percent that Gen. Abizaid cited for Iraq’s insurgency.
Comparisons of Insurgent and Iraqi Forces

There is no way to quantify how the trends in insurgent strength have kept pace with development of Iraqi military, security, and police forces. There are also no meaningful comparative casualty estimates, although MNSCT-I has issued reports of over 1,000 dead in the various elements of Iraqi forces, and one US commander has talked about 15,000 insurgent and terrorist casualties.1266

In any case, the value of any numerical comparisons of insurgent to Iraqi forces is uncertain. In some historical cases, the ratio of security forces to insurgents has sometimes had to reach levels of 12:1 through 30:1 in order to provide security in a given area. These, however, have generally been worst cases where tiny cadres could hide in large areas or among large populations, and where there was no political solution to the problems that created the insurgency and little or no active presence by the government. In other cases, a small number of security forces have decapitated a movement or cell and ended the insurgency. Intangibles like the battle for political perceptions and “hearts and minds” have often been more critical than the comparative numbers of insurgents and defenders.

The effectiveness of the insurgents relative to the effectiveness of their opposition has also generally been more important than such ratios. As the previous Chapters have shown, threat forces have never been strong enough to win more than small ambushes or clashes, but their tactics and capabilities have evolved steadily through the course of the conflict in response to

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Figure V.3: Ratios of Insurgents to Population and Guerillas to Underground Members
(For Seven Irregular Conflicts)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Insurgents as % of Population</th>
<th>Ratio of Armed Guerillas to Unarmed Members of the Underground</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>0.97 %</td>
<td>1:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1940-45)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yugoslavia</td>
<td>1.65 %</td>
<td>1:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1941-45)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>0.29 - 0.58 %</td>
<td>1:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1954-62)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaya</td>
<td>1.9 %</td>
<td>1:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1948-60)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>8.86 %</td>
<td>1:27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1945-49)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>0.58 %</td>
<td>1:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1946-54)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>2.25 %</td>
<td>1:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1945-48)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

attacks by Coalition and Iraqi forces, their own inventiveness, and lessons learned from other conflicts.

It does seem clear from the previous chapters that the insurgents and terrorists have grown in capability, although serious fighting in Fallujah, Mosul, Samarra, and Western Iraq may have reduced their size. The insurgents have learned a great deal about how to use their weapons, build more sophisticated IEDs, plan attacks and ambushes, improve their security, and locate and attack targets that are both soft and that produce political and media impact.

**The Intelligence and Security Problem**

There are several additional aspects of the insurgency that are an important background to any discussion of its individual elements.

**Insurgent Intelligence Capabilities**

“Ba’athists,” “Sunni nationalists,” and Sunni Islamist extremists, all pose acute security and counterintelligence problems for MNF-I and Iraqi forces. As has been touched upon in previous chapters, the insurgents have good sources within the Iraqi Interim Government and forces, Iraqi society and sometimes in local US and Coalition commands. This is inevitable, and little can be done to stop it. Iraq simply lacks the resources and data to properly vet all of the people it recruits. US officials believe the insurgent leadership is often so well informed by its intelligence network that it can stay ahead of US and Iraqi forces, fleeing towns before Coalition forces arrive and slipping in and out of the country.

There are good reasons for these intelligence and security problems. Many Iraqis only work for the government or in the Iraqi forces because they cannot find other employment. They may, in fact, quietly sympathize with the insurgents. Workers in US and government facilities, and in various aid and construction projects, are even harder to vet. Men who do support the government are vulnerable to threats against the families, kidnappings, and actual murders of friends and relatives.

The end result is that the insurgents often have excellent intelligence from sources within the Iraqi government, Iraqi forces, the Iraqis supporting Coalition forces and government activities, and Iraqi industry. This enables them to locate soft targets, hit at key points in terms of Iraq’s economy and aid projects, and time their attacks to points of exceptional vulnerability. In practice, it also allows them to pick weak and vulnerable elements of the Iraqi military, security, and police forces and often produce significant casualties. At the same time, in many areas they can use intimidation, threats, kidnappings, and selective murders and assassinations to paralyze or undercut Iraqi units. This means a comparatively small number of core insurgents can bypass or attack the developing Iraqi forces with considerable success.

The insurgents also can take advantage of new reporting on the Internet, the steady growth of Iraqi media and near-real time news reporting, and other media coverage of the fighting, particularly Arab satellite television. This coverage has often provided almost immediate feedback and a picture of what tactics and weapons work, what strikes have most media and political impact, and what targets are vulnerable. This “Al Jazeera Effect” substitutes for many elements of a CI system. At the same time, confronting this confusing array of threats is made more difficult without general Iraqi loyalty and stand-alone Iraqi forces.
Counterintelligence and Iraqi Government Efforts

Some US officials have expressed frustration with the Iraqi government for failing to move quickly enough in developing its own intelligence agency. US and Iraqi authorities worked together in a joint intelligence effort to capture former Ba’ath Party members, including Saddam Hussein, and Washington would like to see the same happen with Zarqawi. But according to US officials, Baghdad has been unable to establish a network of local informants.

US, allied, and Iraqi human intelligence is improving but Coalition efforts are badly hurt by high turnover and rotations, poor allocation of human resources that sharply overstaff some areas and under staff some key links, over-compartmentalization, over reliance on contractors, and poorly designed and executed IT and secure communications systems.

Most Iraqi networks serving the US in hostile areas have quality and loyalty problems, while others either use their positions to settle scores or misinform Coalition troops. Iraqi intelligence is just beginning to take shape, and has only limited coverage of Sunni areas. Training and equipment have improved significantly over time. The October 2005 report to Congress showed the number of tips from Iraqi citizens had increased by more than six fold from 483 March, to 1,591 in April, 1,740 in May, 2,519 in June, 3,303 in July, 3,341 in August 2005 and 4,749 in September. More recent reporting shows they totaled 3,162 in October, 4,212 in November, and 3,840 in December. According to data provided in the May 2006 report to Congress, the level of tips has leveled off and in continued to hover between 4,000 and 4,500 in the first months of 2006. By the end of December the total had reached 4,731, then dipped to 4,025 in January and climbed back up slowly to 4,235 in February and 4,578 in March.

The organization of effective Iraqi government intelligence and counter intelligence efforts will take at least until the end of 2005 and probably well into 2006. Moreover, Coalition and Iraqi government vulnerability is unavoidable to some extent. Aid projects are easy to infiltrate and to target when nearing completion. NGO or contractor headquarters are easily observable targets. Infrastructure and energy facilities are typical targets that have long lines of pipes or wires and many vulnerable links. The media has to be careful and defensive, as do emergency workers and medical teams. Any nation is invariably filled with soft or vulnerable targets that experienced insurgents can, and do, target at will.

Financing the Insurgency

The exact sources of insurgent finances are another major area of debate. Analysts believe that elements of Saddam Hussein’s regime sought refuge in the UAE, Jordan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Syria at various points before, during, and after major combat operations in Iraq. Those elements were then able to establish a financial base from which to send funds to the insurgents on the ground.

In July 2005 a senior intelligence officer in the US Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA), Caleb Temple, testified before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities and the House Financial Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. Temple stated that the insurgents’ financiers had the connections and enough money to fund their activities, perhaps even increase the violence, for some time. He stated: We believe terrorist and insurgent expenses are moderate and pose little significant restraints to armed groups in Iraq. In particular, arms and munitions costs are minimal—leaving us to judge that the bulk of
the money likely goes towards international and local travel, food and lodging of fighters and families of
deaf fighters; bribery and payoffs of government officials, families and clans; and possibly into the
personal coffers of critical middlemen and prominent terrorist leaders.

Temple and Acting Assistant Treasury Secretary Daniel Glaser asserted that various criminal
activities as well as certain Islamic charities also contributed to the flow of funds to insurgents in
Iraq. Vital to strangling the insurgency, Temple stated, was the ability to staunch the flow of
money. He asserted, “Drying up money and stopping its movement degrades terrorist and
insurgent operations. It hinders recruitment and impedes couriers, disrupts procurement of bomb
components, and creates uncertainty in the minds of suicide bombers regarding whether their
families will receive promised compensation.”

In July 28, 2005 testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Glaser listed some of
the most common methods of funding the insurgency:

- Funds provided by charities, Iraqi expatriates, and other deep pocket donors, primarily in the Gulf, but also
  in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iran, and Europe;
- Criminal activities, such as kidnapping for ransom, possible narcotics trafficking, robbery, theft, extortion,
  smuggling, and counterfeiting (goods and currency).

Glaser also reviewed some of the efforts underway to help stanch these cash flows:

- Since March 2003, the US Government has focused on the need to locate, freeze, and repatriate Iraqi assets
  from around the world, as well as to find cash and other assets within Iraq that were stolen and hidden by
  Former Regime Elements.
- In May 2003 the United Nations Security Council adopted UNSCR 1483, which calls on U.N. Member
  States to identify, freeze and transfer to the Development Fund for Iraq (DFI) assets of senior officials of
  the former Iraqi regime and their immediate family members, including entities owned or controlled by
  them or by persons acting on their behalf. The President subsequently issued Executive Order (E.O.)
  13315, which authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury to freeze the assets of former regime elements. To
date, under E.O. 13315, the Department of the Treasury has designated scores of Iraq-related entities and
  individuals (including 55 senior Iraqi officials who were named by the President in issuing E.O 13315, and
  47 administrative or “derivative” designations.) The US Government, in turn, submits these names to the
  United Nations for listing by the UN 1518 Committee under UNSCR 1483.
- Only a week ago, the Department of the Treasury designated six of Saddam Hussein's nephews (sons of
  Saddam's half brother and former presidential advisor, Sabawi Ibrahim Hasan Al-Tikriti), and we
  understand that their names have now been accepted at the UN. Four of the designated individuals provided
  financial support (and in some cases, weapons and explosives) to Iraqi insurgents. Similarly, on June 17,
  2005, we designated, Muhammad Yunis Ahmad for providing funding, leadership and support from his
  base in Syria to several insurgent groups that are conducting attacks in Iraq.
- On June 9, 2005, we also designated two associated Syrian individuals, General Zuhayr Shalish and Asif
  Shalish and a related asset, the Syria-based SES International Corporation for their support to senior
  officials of the former Iraqi regime. SES also acted as false end-user for the former Iraqi regime and
  facilitated Iraq's procurement of illicit military goods in contravention of UN sanctions.
- Just as there is a U.N. Security Council Resolution requiring countries to freeze the assets of former Iraqi
  regime elements, so too are there U.N. Security Council Resolutions requiring countries to freeze the assets
  of individuals and entities related to al Qa'ida, Usama bin Laden, and the Taliban (UNSCR 1267) and other
global terrorist groups (UNSCR 1373). The US implements its obligations under these resolutions through
E.O. 13224. To date, the Treasury Department has designated over 400 individuals and entities under E.O.
13224. These actions include individuals and entities tied to jihadist insurgency groups: -- Sulayman Khalid
Darwish (January 25, 2005) (Syria-based Zarqawi supporter/financier), also designated by the UN,
pursuant to UNSCR 1267; Syria joined the US in co-designating Darwish at the UN.
• US outreach efforts to countries in the Gulf region are manifold, both bilaterally and multilaterally. For example, just this calendar year I have personally traveled to Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait, and have led the US delegation to the Middle East/North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENA FATF) - a new multilateral body that works to ensure the implementation of comprehensive anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing systems throughout the region. Launched in November 2004, this 14-member body held its first plenary session in Bahrain in April 2005 and is preparing for its second plenary session in September of this year, currently scheduled to take place in Beirut. This body has the potential to be effective in persuading its members to implement systems to freeze assets in a timely and effective manner.

• We also have extensive outreach efforts to Europe - most prominently the US-EU Counter-Terrorist Financing Working Group, chaired by Assistant Secretary of State Anthony Wayne. Through this and other mechanisms, we are working to ensure the effective and aggressive implementation of targeted financial sanctions throughout Europe.

• The full range of US efforts against terrorist financing are coordinated by the Terrorist Financing Policy Coordination Committee (PCC), which is chaired by Deputy National Security Advisor Juan Zarate, and includes representatives from the Departments of the Treasury, State, Justice, and Defense, as well as representatives from the law enforcement and intelligence communities.

US and Iraqi joint raids continued to find foreign fighters. The Iraqi Army arrested 34 people in Baquba on November 8 for violent acts, including five Egyptians and five Sudanese. In a November 19 Press Briefing, Gen. Caldwell said that on average 50-70 foreign fighters were crossing the Syrian border a month. He also said that Iraqi security forces and coalition forces had killed about 425 fighters in 2006 and captured 670 – through November 10. Roughly 20% of the foreign fighters came from Syria, 20% came from Egypt, 12% came from Saudi Arabia, and 13% came from Sudan.

General Abizaid, Commander of USCENTCOM, maintained that the most foreign fighters flowed to Iraq and Iraq remained the hotbed for al-Qaeda activity. Gen. Michael Hayden, Director of the CIA, told the Senate Armed Services Committee that only a “small fraction” of those killed in Iraq were foreign fighters. He estimated that the figure was slightly greater than 3% and that Iraqis themselves were perpetrating the rest of the violence in Iraq. Gen. Hayden stated that the overall number of foreign fighters in Iraq was 1,300.

**The Role of Crime and Criminals**

There is no reliable way to distinguish insurgency from crime. The vast majority of Iraqi criminals probably have limited or no ties to the insurgents. Yet some are clearly “for hire” in terms of what they target or in being willing to take pay for sabotage or acts of violence that help create a climate of violence in given areas.

At least some elements in the Sunni insurgency do, however, work with criminal elements’ looting and sabotage campaigns. These clearly involve some native and foreign Sunni Islamist extremists – particularly in areas like kidnappings – but the alliances “Ba’athists” and “Sunni nationalists” have with criminal groups seem to be much stronger. They also seem to dominate the cases where tribal groups mix insurgents and criminals.

Many US and Iraqi intelligence officers believe that some criminal networks are heavily under the influence of various former regime elements or are dominated by them, and that some elements of organized crime do help the insurgency. The US Defense Intelligence Agency stated in July 2005 that some aspect of insurgent financing was derived from kidnapping for ransom, drug trafficking, robbery, theft, extortion, smuggling and the counterfeiting of goods and
Furthermore, at least some Shi'ite criminal groups and vendettas use the insurgency or Sunnis as a cover for their activities.

The Impact of Crime on the Insurgency

Crime affects intelligence as well as security. Independent criminals, insurgents and their criminal allies understand the limits of Coalition ability to cover the given areas and the Coalition’s vulnerabilities. Many patterns of Coalition, Iraqi government, and Iraqi forces activity are easily observed and have become predictable. Bases can often be observed and are vulnerable at their entrances to rocket and mortar attacks, and along their supply lines. There are many soft and relatively small isolated facilities.

The crime problem also affects Iraqi confidence in the government and its popular legitimacy. Far more Iraqis face day-to-day threats from criminals than from terrorists and insurgents, although there is no area totally free from the risk of attack. If Iraqis are to trust their new government, if insurgents are to be deprived of recruits and proxies, and if Iraq is to move towards economic development and recovery, the crime problem must be solved at the same time the insurgents and terrorists are being defeated. This is a key priority in terms of Iraqi force development because it means effective regular policy is critical, and must have the same emphasis as developing military and security forces.

The Bush Administration summarized the impact of crime in Iraq as follows in its October 13, 2005 report to the Congress on “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq.” The report made it clear that corruption was in many ways as important a criminal activity as the threat outside government, and that the development of an effective judicial and police structure for dealing with crime was still in the initial stages of progress:

The most obvious indicator of success in establishing rule of law in Iraq is probably the crime rate. Unfortunately, data on criminal activity in Iraq are unreliable. If such statistics become available, they will be included in future reports.

All 869 judges in Iraq have been reviewed and 135 removed because of substantial evidence of corruption or Ba’ath Party affiliation. All Iraqi provincial criminal courts are also now operational, although the number of trials proceeding in these courts varies. In some areas, relatively few cases are tried. In general, the primary impediment to prosecuting more cases is the ability of police and prosecutors to collect evidence and prepare cases for trial. The Coalition has therefore trained 99 judicial investigators, who in Iraq assume some of the investigative duties performed by detectives in American police departments.

Training of Iraqi judges is ongoing, with 351 Iraqi judges having received at least some training. The Coalition has also established a witness protection program and a judicial security program to protect judges and courthouses. In addition, the Coalition is engaged in ongoing efforts to build Iraqi prisons and train corrections officers and to encourage the Iraqi government to assume full responsibility for security internees.

The Central Criminal Court of Iraq is the court that tries defendants accused of terrorism and crimes against the Coalition, among other crimes. Since its inception, it has conducted 544 trials and handed down 522 convictions. (Some of the trials involved multiple defendants.)

The Iraqi Special Tribunal (IST) has begun the process of prosecuting Saddam Hussein and other top officials of his regime. Under the Iraqi system, a defendant is given a separate trial for each event that constitutes a crime. Saddam is therefore likely to face multiple, different trials. The first of these trials is currently scheduled to begin on October 19. The US Department of Justice-supported Regime Crimes Liaison Office continues to assist with preparing the IST, providing training and other support for IST attorneys and judges.

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There appeared to be only limited progress in this area by May 2006. Estimates that it would take until at least 2009 before Iraq would have over 1,000 judges emphasized the time needed to establish a system of courts. In its updated report, the Department of Defense commented on the status of the judiciary:\textsuperscript{1281}

“As reported previously, the relatively small number of Iraqi judges (fewer than 800 nationwide, out of a projected need for at least 1,200) face profound challenges, both procedural and substantive, in responding to a large criminal caseload, and an equally large number of detainees. However, it is important to note that currently that there are 150 judges in a two-year training program that concludes in January 2007, at which time they will join the bench and another 150 judges will join the training program. Thus, by January 2009, the total number of trained judges will be 1,100…”

…Inextricably tied to this issue is the related and equally compelling problem of threats of violence – and actual acts of violence – against members of the sitting judiciary. Virtually no month passes without some serious threat and/or act of violence visited upon a judge. The US Government has responded by providing secure housing, personal security details, courthouse protection, and personal protection firearms to some members of the Iraqi judiciary through the US Department of Justice’s Marshal Services. These efforts are paying off, as illustrated by the 47% decrease in assaults against members of the judiciary since May 2005.”

The August-November 2006 Department of Defense Stability and Security Report stated, “Political stability in Iraq is predicated on achieving the rule of law. The rule of law requires a functional legal code, police to investigate crimes and enforce laws, criminal and civil courts to administer justice, and prisons to incarcerate offenders.” The Pentagon assessed, however, “Although progress continues, development and implementation of rule of law initiatives has been slow, contributing to crime, corruption, and the proliferations of illegal armed groups. Mistrust between the police forces and the judiciary further hampers progress in the development of the rule of law.”

The report said that the Iraqi Constitution was vague on some rights and freedoms. It also said that within the police forces, “corruption and smuggling are becoming more organized and entrenched,” because there was little emphasis on training and investigating criminal activities. To combat that problem, the Ministry of Interior was planning to add thousands of forensic specialists to the police forces, who would be trained by MNSTC-I.

The Pentagon’s update realistically reported on the many problems in Iraqi courts. The Constitution allowed suspects to see a judge within 24 hours, but that rarely happened due to, “an acute shortage of investigative judges, prosecutors, judicial investigators, and trial judges, and systemic inefficiencies, including the lack of cooperation and communication between the police and the judiciary.”

In November 2006, Iraq had 800 investigative and trial judges and 100 courts – not nearly enough for the massive number of detainees. The Iraqi government instituted several training programs to try and increase the number of judges for 2007. The DoD report noted that corruption in the judiciary was less rampant than other areas of the government, but instead the problem was “judicial intimidation and lack of security.” Throughout the insurgency and proceeding civil conflict, judges received threats and were frequently attacked. This intimidation thus led to judges to “fail to report to work, resign from their positions, fear reaching verdicts against powerful defendants, and, in the provinces, decline to investigate and try insurgent and terrorism related cases.” The DoD report called for a judicial security force and a more secure court system that would help the retention rate of judges.
The November Stability and Security Report also said that Ministry of Interior detention facilities in Iraq “are overcrowded, with substandard facilities and poor accountability for persons detained.” Ministry of Defense detention facilities were acceptable, but only housed post-conviction criminals.\textsuperscript{1282}

\textbf{The Strength of Criminal Activity}

Like most aspects of the insurgency, it is difficult to know the strength of criminal elements and the extent to which they are and are not tied to insurgent groups. The collapse of Saddam’s regime, massive unemployment, the disbanding of a wide range of military and security elements, the destruction of Iraq’s military industries, de-Ba’athification, and sheer opportunism have all combined to make organized and violent crime an endemic part of Iraqi society even in many areas where the insurgents have little real strength. Criminals are also a powerful force behind local vigilante and militia efforts that at least indirectly challenge the legitimacy of the central government.

Crime has virtually the same impact as sabotage even when there is no deliberate intent to support the insurgency. Acts like wire and equipment theft limit the government’s ability to distribute electrical power add to the image of ineffective governance. Similarly, oil and gas thefts add to Iraqi fuel problems and deprive the government of revenues. While most kidnappings are almost certainly decoupled from any political motive, some may have been done for hire at the bidding of various insurgent groups. At best, the end result is a climate of cumulative violence, with some elements of Sunni versus Shi’ite tension. At worst, crime vastly compounds the government and Coalitions security problems, offers insurgent groups yet another kind of informal network, helps block investment and development, compounds the problem of hiring security forces, and undermines legitimacy.

The fact that the Ministry of Interior stopped reporting meaningful crime statistics in mid-2004 makes trend analysis almost impossible. The same is true of the casualties involved. The Ministry of Health reported in the spring of 2005 that some 5,158 Iraqis had died from all forms of criminal and insurgent activities during the last six months of 2004, but most experts felt such reporting might only include about half the real total. The Baghdad Central Morgue counted 8,035 deaths from unnatural causes in Baghdad alone in 2004, a major increase from 6,012 in 2003 and a figure that compared with 1,800 in 2002 -- the last year of Saddam Hussein. The morgue reported that 60\% of those killed were killed by gunshot wounds and were unrelated to the insurgency. These deaths were largely a combination of crime, tribal vendettas, vengeance killings, and mercenary kidnappings.\textsuperscript{1283}

It is also all too clear that the focus on defeating active insurgents has not been matched by similar efforts to develop effective police forces and prison system, eliminate corruption, create a working and efficient judicial system, or create an effective system for prosecution. The end result is that day-to-day security, even in areas without active insurgent activity, is often poor to non-existent, dependent on local forces or militias, and/or dependent on bribes and protection money. This makes it easier for insurgents to infiltrate, allows them to become the de facto security force or intimidate the population in some Sunni areas, alienates some of the government’s potential supporters, and leads to widespread distrust of the police and criminal justice system. The situation has not been helped by the relatively limited staffing of the Ministry of the Interior, the Sunni perception that it is Shi’ite dominated, and the fact that the Coalition
advisory effort remained limited and understaffed through October 1, 2005 -- when it was reorganized and put under the MNSTC-I.

In the early months of 2006, there appeared to be an increase in the number of abductions for ransom, and attacks and follow on robberies of local businesses. Many of these acts, however, are difficult to distinguish from ongoing sectarian violence and the perpetrators are not easily identified. It is likely a mix between insurgent groups, militias, organized crime and simple criminals.

By the end of March 2006, Iraqi police said that as many as 30 people are reported kidnapped every day.\textsuperscript{1284} It is likely that many kidnappings go unrecorded however, as families prefer to pay the ransom rather than involve the police who may be involved in the abduction.

In one instance, a British-trained surgeon received a phone call at his practice from the “Mujahideen” who asked for “a donation to help our cause.” They made a suggestion of 10,000 dollars in exchange for protection. The doctor, given two days to collect the money, fled to Jordan when he received a text message threatening his life.\textsuperscript{1285}

In another case, men claiming to be from an anti-terrorist squad walked into a medical supply store and removed 40,000 dollars from the safe. They proceeded to kidnap the owner’s son and detained him until the family paid 40,000 dollars, only a fraction of the 250,000 dollars they originally demanded.\textsuperscript{1286}

A string of these kidnappings and assaults happened in March:\textsuperscript{1287}

- March 8, 2006: 50 employees are abducted from a Baghdad security company.
- March 24, 2006: In the Saydiyah district, south of Baghdad, gunmen killed four pastry shop employees
- March 26, 2006: Gunmen in military uniforms kidnapped 16 people from an Iraqi export company in central Baghdad.
- March 28, 2006: In three separate incidents, gunmen, many in military uniforms wearing masks, kidnapped 24 people from two electronics stores and a currency exchange stealing thousands of dollars in the process.
- March 29, 2006: Gunmen identifying themselves as MOI police entered the offices of a construction firm and lined up the employees, killing 8. They abducted the manager and fled the scene.

In one day in March, 21 people were abducted in four separate incidents. 15 men dressed as members of the Iraqi Army dragged six people out of a money exchange shop and stole almost 60,000 dollars. In two other similar events, men wearing MOI uniforms kidnapped individuals from two electronics shops.\textsuperscript{1288} A joint U.S.-Iraqi raid in late March, allegedly on a Shi’ite mosque, resulted in the rescue of one Iraqi hostage who had been threatened with torture and death by militiamen if his family did not pay 20,000.\textsuperscript{1289} Abu Sufiyan, a well known Baghdad businessman, was found dead with signs of torture even after his family had paid $120,000 to secure his release.\textsuperscript{1290}

The focus on wealthy Iraqi’s caused some well-off individuals to move to poor neighborhoods, sell their property or businesses and live more modestly in general to avoid attracting the attention of criminals, kidnappers or assassins. In many cases, individuals who had survived their
abductions said that the gangs had obtained extensive, often confidential information, on their assets and worth.\textsuperscript{1291}

While small-scale crime and corruption were rampant, there were also larger criminal enterprises taking advantage of the general lack of security and authority. In April 2006, Iraqi police busted an oil smuggling ring attempting to export more than 50,000 metric tons of oil to Syria. This was to be sent over in 1,200 trucks and was the equivalent of 400,000 barrels – roughly a fifth of Iraq’s daily production – valued at 28 million dollars. The seizure of the oil and the arrest of those involved were the largest anti-smuggling effort ever by Iraqi authorities and was the culmination of more than a month of investigation and surveillance.\textsuperscript{1292}

**Endemic Corruption**


Involving a budget of $21.9 billion, Walker described the Iraqi reconstruction program as the “largest…since the Marshall Plan.” He linked setbacks in the reconstruction campaign to the faulty pre-war assumption that “there would be a permissive security environment…to allow reconstruction to go forward,” and that “the Iraqi government would make important contributions” to such an effort largely through oil revenues.\textsuperscript{1293}

The GAO director of international affairs and trade, Joseph Christoff, said that the Iraqi budget was paying for “what some could contend to be a bloated bureaucracy,” and “ghost employees,” as it was often difficult to discern who was working in the different ministries.\textsuperscript{1294}

Stuart W. Bowen Jr., the US administration’s special inspector general for Iraq reconstruction (SIGIR), issued a series of reports that addressed the severity of corruption in Iraq. Bowen uncovered “an $8 billion gap in spending accountability by the defunct Coalition Provisional Authority, significant theft and fraud by military officers and an American businessman in the town of Hillah, incompetence in the construction of health care centers and oil pipelines, and a shortfall in what needs to be built with the money on hand.”\textsuperscript{1295}

Bowen’s staff, as well as other US government agencies, has spearheaded efforts to establish financial watchdog organizations in Iraq aimed at curbing corruption. These included:\textsuperscript{1296}

- **The Commission on Public Integrity**, which was established by the former CPA and concentrated on white-collar crime.
- **The Board of Supreme Audit**, which was responsible for examining the records of each Iraqi ministry.
- **Inspectors General** who responded to complaints of crimes or mismanagement and made referrals to criminal investigators if necessary
- **The Central Criminal Court of Iraq**, which tried both white-collar and violent crimes.

In an interview with *The Guardian*, Stuart Bowen of SIGIR said that Iraq was in danger of being brought down by a “second insurgency.” Bowen defined the “second insurgency” as smuggling
of oil and widespread corruption. The “virtual pandemic” of corruption cost Iraq roughly $4 billion a year.\textsuperscript{297}

The level of corruption in Iraq at the end of 2006 was illustrated by the black market for weapons. The October SIGIR report stated that roughly 4% - about 14,000 weapons – were lost in the process of being transferred to Iraqi security forces, none of which the US military had records of. A \textit{New York Times} report, however, offered an even bleaker assessment of the ultimate destination of American weapons.

The 4% reported by SIGIR did not include weapons sold by Iraqi security forces on the black market. The weapons, mostly pistols, often brought more money than several months pay for ISF. Deserters from the police and army sold their weapons on the black market for an increasingly larger price as Sunnis and Shi’a across Iraq armed themselves for widespread civil conflict. ISF also sometimes reported that their weapons were “stolen.”

In either case, US issues weapons were easy to find in black market stores around the country. The demand for weapons resulted in rising prices – pistol prices tripled since 2003 – which in turn offered greater incentive for ISF to sell their weapons on the black market. Rising prices also led to increased raids on US and Iraqi army weapon warehouses. A black market dealer said, “Almost all of the weapons come from the Iraqi police and army. They are our best suppliers.” He added, “In the south, if the Americans give the Iraqis weapons, the next day you can buy them here. The Iraqi army, the Iraqi police – they all sell them right away.”

The weapons black market underscored the problems of US reconstruction and development in Iraq. The rapidly distributed weapons were expected to accelerate the training of ISF, but most pistols ended up in the hands of those fighting US and Iraqi forces, according to the Times article. The US military said that it began tracking serial numbers on weapons sent to Iraq, but it appeared that a large number of the 138,000 Glock pistols and 165,000 Kalashnikov rifles were already in other hands.\textsuperscript{298}

The level of corruption in Iraqi ministries was also visible in failure to spend billions of dollars of oil revenues set aside for reconstruction. The failure to spend the money was due to “rapid personnel turnover in government, security woes, endemic corruption and a lack of technocrats skilled at jobs like writing contracts and managing complex projects,” according to the \textit{New York Times}.

The oil minister said that the Finance Ministry taking too long to authorize payments caused part of the problem. American officials, however, said that the strict measures put on Iraqi ministries to stop corruption may have scared many government employees away from putting their own name on a contract.

According to the Oil Ministry, about half of the revenue was intended for repair of oil infrastructure, but little of it was ever spent. Overall, Iraqi ministries spend at little at 15% of their 2006 capital budgets for reconstruction. Iraqi-run reconstruction efforts were thus hampered by as many problems as US-led programs.\textsuperscript{299}

The Iraq Study Group report agreed that corruption was rampant in Iraq’s government. An Iraqi official told the Group that corruption cost Iraq between $5-7 billion a year. The Report did acknowledge two promising steps: Iraq created a functioning audit board with inspectors general in the ministries, and leaders spoke out against corruption.\textsuperscript{300}
Regarding corruption in the political ministries the November DoD Stability and Security in Iraq report stated:\textsuperscript{1301}

Corruption in the ministries had hampered their capabilities. Many of Iraq’s political factions tend to view government ministries and their associated budgets as sources of power, patronage, and funding for their parties. Ministers without strong party ties face significant pressure from political factions and sometimes have little control over the politically appointed and connected people serving under them. This corruption erodes public confidence in the elected government.

**The Fuel Crisis**

Corruption and insurgent attacks on pipelines contributed to the severity of the fuel crisis in Baghdad, where the price of black-market fuel reached as much as $4 per gallon in August.\textsuperscript{1302} At that time, President Jalal Talabani said “I realize that people are really suffering from the lack of energy and security, but this not the fault of the government… Terrorists have blown up many power stations as well as the pipeline” that delivers crude oil from the northern fields around Kirkuk to the main refinery in Beiji, located 155 miles north of Baghdad.\textsuperscript{1303}

Oil ministry spokesperson Assem Jihad said that the Beiji facility had a capacity to refine 2 million to 2.25 million gallons of gasoline per day during the pre-war period, but had dropped to production levels of less than 260,000 gallons of gasoline per day. He attributed this decline primarily to electricity shortages, and threats to refinery operators.\textsuperscript{1304}

The oil crisis was compounded by a burgeoning black market and widespread theft and corruption. In 2005, 450 Oil Ministry employees were dismissed for illegally selling oil and petroleum products. According to the Oil Ministry’s inspector general, Ali-al-Álãak, roughly $4 billion worth of petroleum products were smuggled out of Iraq that year, including gasoline, and crude oil siphoned from pipelines.\textsuperscript{1305}

The August 2006 DoD Quarterly Report to Congress identified four primary factors limiting production at the Beiji refinery: (1) maintenance issues with key components in the refinery, (2) an inefficient refining process, (3) an unreliable flow of crude oil into the refinery, and (4) security threats to personnel.\textsuperscript{1306}

In early August, the main oil facility in Latifiyah was forced to shut down after workers received death threats. According to the Oil Ministry, more than 250 Oil Ministry officials, workers, and security guards had been killed since the ousting of Saddam Hussein. And the US Energy and Information Administration estimated 315 major attacks on pipelines, electricity plants, and other energy infrastructure in the period from April 2003 to June 2006.

The August 2006 Pentagon Quarterly Report to Congress acknowledged that “poor maintenance, insurgent attacks, slow repair, and corruption have slowed progress” in efforts to rebuild Iraq’s energy infrastructure. “Beyond attacks on various worksites,” the report noted, “terrorists have attacked crude export and petroleum product pipelines, impeding exports and the refining and distribution of petroleum products, such as gasoline and diesel.”\textsuperscript{1307} In spite of these setbacks, the report noted that crude oil production increased by 18 percent since the previous reporting period to 2.2 mbpd (See Figure V.4), but did not reach the Iraqi government’s target level of 2.5 mbpd.

The report warned that an over-subsidization of fuel, with regular gasoline regulated at $0.55 per gallon, and premium gasoline at $0.90 per gallon, led to a “disconnect between supply and demand,” feeding black market activity and corruption.\textsuperscript{1308} However, the DoD document failed
to address critical issues pertaining to the oil industry including field management and development, war flooding, and crude oil injection and overproduction.

In his July 11 testimony before the House Government Subcommittee meeting, David M. Walker, head of the GAO said that roughly 10 percent of Iraq’s refined fuels, and 30 percent of its imported fuels were stolen. He partially attributed widespread theft in the industry to the over-subsidization of fuels which “[provided] tremendous incentives” for corruptive practices.1309

Oil sales at the end of 2006 accounted for 70% of Iraq’s GDP and 95% of government revenues.1310 However, Stuart Bowen of SIGIR said in an interview with The Guardian that oil smuggling was threatening to bring down the Iraqi government. He stated that it was the “number one problem” because insurgents attacked northern oil lines and trucks had to transport the oil, making it susceptible to smuggling.1311

According to Iraq’s oil minister, Hussein al-Shahristani, Iraq produced an average of 2.3 million bpd in October and exported between 1.6 and 1.7 million bpd. He stated that produced was expected to reach 3 million bpd by the end of 2006 and 4.5 million bpd by 2010.1312 Shahristani’s expectations were unlikely to be met, however, as November saw a drop in production to 2.04 million bpd with 1.47 million bpd exported. The official goal set by the Iraqi government was 2.5mil bpd – a shortfall of 47% in November, 43% in October, and 33% in September. Oil only produced revenue of $1.26 billion in November - and if Bowen’s assessment was correct - a good portion of that money was eaten away by corruption.1313

The Iraq Study Group Report stated several problems inhibiting the production of oil:1314

There is no metering system for the oil. There is poor maintenance at pumping stations, pipelines, and port facilities, as well as inadequate investment in modern technology. Iraq had a cadre of experts in the oil sector, but intimidation and an extended migration of experts to other countries have eroded technical capacity. Foreign companies have been reluctant to invest, and Iraq’s Ministry of Oil has been unable to spend more than 15% of its capital budget.

Experts estimate that 150,000 to 200,000 – and perhaps as many as 500,000 – barrels of oil per day are being stolen. Controlled prices for refined products result in shortages within Iraq, which drive consumers to the thriving black market.

In early December the New York Times reported that Iraq was near a deal on a national oil law. A committee to debate an oil law was established in June 2006, but efforts to reach a compromise accelerated at the end of the year. The draft of the law – which needed final approval – would give the central government control over current and future oil revenues. The government would distribute revenues to provinces based on their population.

In previous months Kurdish officials sought to ensure the rights of distribution for regional governments, but those demands were dropped at the end of 2006 in favor of central control. A Kurdish official said, “Revenue sharing is an accepted principle by all the constituent elements of the Iraqi government, including the Kurds, and that is the unifying element that we’re all hoping for in the oil law.” Officials involved said that the Kurds accepted that a national oil law would most likely draw more international investment and development in oil rich Kurdistan than a law of an autonomous region.

The remaining issue at debate concerned contracts for developing future oil fields. The Kurds conceded that a national oil law would benefit the region more, but were unwilling to forfeit control of the development of future fields. If implemented, that draft of the oil law would
resurrect that Iraq National Oil Company, originally established in 1964 and shutdown in 1987. Officials said that the company would be a separate business from the oil ministry, eliminated ties to corruption.\textsuperscript{1315}

The Pentagon’s August-November Stability and Security in Iraq Report said:\textsuperscript{1316}

The Coalition has worked to help the Government of Iraq restore oil facilities, increase production, improve refining, boost natural gas production, and maintain pipeline facilities. However, poor operational and maintenance practices, insurgent attacks, slow repair, and flawed procurement and contracting procedures have hampered progress and have precluded the Ministry of Oil from providing sufficient funds for operations and maintenance, needed rehabilitation projects, and new field development.

Oil exports failed to meet the goal of 1.7 million barrels per day and production fell short of 2.5 mbpd goal. In addition, on September 6, 2006 the Iraqi government passed the Fuel Importation Liberalization Law, which allowed parties other than the government to refine oil. The goal for 2007 was lowered to 2.1 mbpd.
Figure V.4: Oil Production, Million of Barrels per day: May 2006-January 2007

VIII. The Dominant Role of Iraqi Sunni Arab Insurgents

There is no debate among experts over the fact that Sunni Arabs dominate the insurgency. There are serious debates over the extent to which the insurgency is now dominated by Neo-Salafi Islamist extremists or whether there are still large numbers of insurgents that are more nationalist, secular, and pro-Ba’ath in character. Similar debates have emerged over how unified and coordinated the various insurgent groups are, over the extent to which they have non-Iraqi leaders and members, and over possible conflicts between the Neo-Salafi Islamist extremist groups and other more “nationalist” Iraq insurgent groups and Iraqi Arab Sunnis who wish to join the political process or simply be left to get on with their lives.

As is the case with efforts to estimate the total manning of the insurgents, there are no reliable estimates of the numbers of the various types of Sunni insurgents, or breakdowns of their strength by motivation and group. Some 35 Sunni Arab "groups" have made some kind of public announcement of their existence, or claimed responsibility for terrorist or insurgent attacks – although many may be little more than cells and some may be efforts to shift the blame for attacks or make the insurgent movement seem larger than it is.1317

There seem to be at least three main groups of insurgents but other groups may simply be cover names, cells or elements of other larger groups, or little more than tribal or clan groupings, since some local elements of the Sunni insurgency have strong tribal affiliations or cells.

The Sunni elements of the insurgency clearly involve a wide range of disparate Iraqi and foreign groups, and mixes of secular and Islamic extremist factions. There are elements tied to former Ba’athist officials, and to Iraqi and Sunni nationalists. There are elements composed of native Iraqi Sunni Islamists, groups with outside leadership and links to Al Qa’ida, and foreign volunteers with little real structure -- some of which seem to be seeking Islamic martyrdom rather than clearly defined political goals. An overwhelming majority of those captured, killed, and detained to date, however, have been Iraqi Sunnis.

The leading insurgent groups complicate analysis because they may use several different names, organize themselves into compartmented subgroups, and are increasing organized so that their cadres are in relatively small and specialized cells. Some cells seem to be as small as 2 or 3 men. Others seem to operate as much larger, but normally dispersed groups, capable of coming together for operations of as many as 30-50 men. These subgroups and cells can recruit or call in larger teams, and the loss of even a significant number of such cells may not cripple a given group. Even if it did, several Sunni groups operate in most high threat areas.

Tribal and clan elements play a role at the local level, creating additional patterns of loyalty that cut across ideology and political goals. In one documented incident, a Sunni tribe in Samarra tried and publicly executed al-Qa’ida members for the murder of a local sheik after an interrogation.1318 The stated objectives of various groups range from a return of some form of Ba’athist like regime to the creation of an extremist Sunni Islamic state, with many Iraqi Sunnis acting as much out of anger and fear as any clearly articulated goals.

The various insurgent and terrorist groups often cooperated, although there are indications of divisions between the more-Ba’ath oriented Iraqi Sunni groups and some of the Sunni Islamic extremist groups with outside ties or direction. At least some Sunni groups were willing to
consider negotiating with the new government, while Islamist extremist groups were not. This led to threats and some violence between various Sunni factions.\textsuperscript{1319}

At the same time, the threat continues that Sunni Arab extremists will provoke something approaching a full-scale civil war. They have stepped up suicide and other attacks on Shi’ites and Kurds. Many of these attacks have clearly been designed to block efforts at including Sunnis in the government and to try to provoke Shi’ites and Kurds into reprisals that will make a stable national government impossible to achieve.

The constant Sunni insurgent efforts to divide the country along sectarian and ethnic lines could radically alter the balance of power if Iraq does drift into full-scale civil war. There is also the risk that new insurgent groups could emerge. A violent split between the Arab Shi’ites and Kurds remains possible, as do such splits within the major Shi’ite factions inside and outside the government.

Barring such divisions, however, the insurgency will remain largely Iraqi and Sunni dominated. CENTCOM estimated in the summer of 2005 that 90 percent of the insurgency was Iraqi and Sunni, with a maximum of 10 percent foreign contribution to insurgent manpower.\textsuperscript{1320} While relatively small, this foreign element is recognized as almost exclusively Sunni, a particularly violent segment of the insurgency, and ideologically driven by Neo-Salafi extremism. Likewise, the foreign element is seen as an important source of money and materiel support to the insurgency.

\textbf{The Areas of Major Sunni Insurgent Influence}

The main Sunni insurgent groups are concentrated in cities ranging from areas like Mosul and Baghdad; in Sunni-populated areas like the “Sunni Triangle,” the Al Anbar Province to the west of Baghdad, and the so-called “Triangle of Death” to the southeast of Baghdad; and in Sunni areas near the Iraqi and Turkish borders. As a result, four of Iraq’s provinces have both a major insurgency threat and a major insurgent presence. At the same time, they have continued to lack the ideological cohesion and operational coordination necessary to mobilize Iraqi Sunni Arabs with optimal effect.

Sunni insurgents have exerted considerable sway--at various points--in Fallujah, Rawa, Anna, Haditha, Ramadi, Rutbah, Qaim, Ubaydi, Karabilah, Haqliniyah, Barwanah, Tal Afar, and others. They have not, however, established long-term control over “safe havens” from which to operate, and Coalition assaults have disrupted continuous insurgent control in such areas and the creation of insurgent sanctuaries.

General John Abizaid, commander of the US Central Command, has said that the four provinces with particularly difficult security situations are western Baghdad, Al Anbar, Nineveh and Salahuddin.\textsuperscript{1321} Yet, even in these areas -- where insurgents have significant local influence -- much of the population is divided and only limited areas have normally been under active insurgent control.

In October of 2005, a Congressional report noted that the insurgency remained concentrated in four of Iraq’s eighteen provinces: Baghdad, Al Anbar, Ninewah, and Salah ad Din. As has already been shown in Figure V.1, these four provinces have less than 42% of the country’s population but account for 85% of the violence.\textsuperscript{1322}
Al Anbar is both Iraq’s largest province (roughly the size of Belgium), and one of its least populated – roughly one million people out of Iraq’s 27 million. It is at least 90% Sunni Arab, and offers a route to a potential sanctuary in Syria, and has borders with Jordan and Saudi Arabia as well. Aside from Fallujah, the area immediately surrounding the Euphrates, and its agricultural areas have become a key operating area for insurgents. So have the towns along the Iraqi-Syrian where insurgents have take advantage of the desert and rough terrain for smuggling and dispersal. While it has some major cities, it has long been a tribal area where the government has exercised limited control.

Given these factors, it is scarcely surprising that it has been a center of the Sunni insurgency, and some estimates indicate that 500 of the 1,630 US servicemen killed in Iraq during the war up to June 2, 2005, died in Al Anbar. It is one of the few areas where insurgents have openly occupied towns and set up check points, and large numbers of Jordanian truck drivers have been killed on the road from Amman in an effort to break up lines of supply.1323

Sunni Islamist Extremist and Neo-Salafi vs. “Nationalist” Insurgents

Experts differ on how much insurgent groups compete or coordinate, and how different their goals are. The groups that make the most use of public statements and the Internet do tend to advance common themes. They at least claim to be Sunni Islamist in character, and insurgent web sites do reflect a shift towards the use of more religious rhetoric and themes over time. Like many oppositionist and radical movements, however, it is not always clear what such Islamist claims really mean.

Leaders may be true believers and strongly support Neo-Salafi beliefs, but such Puritanism does not really set clear goals for the future. It seems likely that most leaders and the vast majority of Sunni insurgents know far more about what they are against than what they are for.

This does give them a common set of targets and to some extent means they pursue a common strategy. At the same time, a number of intelligence, Coalition, and Iraqi government experts feel the insurgents do divide into two major groups:

- **The first are largely native Iraqi Sunni insurgents.** They still seem to be primarily nationalist in character. They are not seeking regional or global Jihad, but rather the ability to influence or control events in Iraq. In general, native Iraqi Sunni “nationalists” want to return to a government closer to the Ba'athist regime. They may be religious, but a secular regime under Sunni control is acceptable. Their primary goal is to regain the power they once had, or at the minimum obtain their “fair share” of power and not be subject to Shi’ite rule. Anger, revenge, economic need, opposition to the US invasion and any government that grows out of it or sheer lack of hope in the current system are all motives as well.

- **The second consists of Sunni “neo-Salafi” insurgents** – particularly those led by harder-line neo-Salafi figures like Zarqawi. These groups have different goals. They believe they are fighting a region-wide war in Iraq for a form of Sunni extremism that not only will eliminate any presence by Christians and Jews, but also create a Sunni puritan state in which other sects of Islam are forced to convert to their interpretation or are destroyed.

Most of these groups avoid attacking other sects of Islam, at least publicly and have made a growing effort to identify them as Iraqi rather than, as groups dominated by foreign leaders are influence. Others, like the group led by Zarqawi, are more extreme. These neo-Salafis have little of mainstream Islam's tolerance for “peoples of the book,” but they have no tolerance of other interpretations of Islam. Such insurgents are known in the Muslim world as Takferies—a term that refers to groups that base their ideology on determining who is a believer in their view. They see those who do not fit their definition of piety as...
apostates. To some, particularly the group led by Zarqawi, all other Islamic sects like Shi’ites and even other Sunnis, are effectively nonbelievers or Kafirs.

Such generalizations have severe limits and uncertainties. There is no way to know how many Iraqis support the neo-Salafi and other Sunni extremist elements of the insurgency, any more than there are any precise counts of the foreign volunteers who support them. It is unclear how many members of Sunni extremist groups actually support the group’s ideological goals rather than act out of anger, misinformation, and/or a naïve search for martyrdom.

It is also important to point out that Sunni Puritanism does not, in itself, mean advocating violence against other Islamic sects or those outside Islam. Other Sunni puritan movements call Shi’ites and other sects heretics (bid’a), attacker of God’s unity (tawhid), and even as advocates of polytheism (shirk). Some extremist puritan Salafis preachers have called Shi’ites apostates, and advocate shunning them, hating them, and scorning them as rawafidh (which means rejectionists; a reference to the Shi’ites’ rejection of electing Abu Bakr as the first Caliph after the death of the Prophet over Ali, Islam fourth Caliph and Shi’ites first Imam). Yet, such religious rhetoric has rarely taken the form of violence. Like Christian and Jewish extremists, words do not necessarily mean a commitment to action.1324

Some traditional Salafist groups and traditional Shi’ite groups have coexisted and worked closely together. Notable examples include Hezbollah, Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Palestine. In addition, the Muslim Brotherhood cooperated with Iran after the revolution in 1979, despite some of the country’s actions against Iranian Sunnis.

**The Nature and of Role Neo-Salafi and Islamist Extremist Groups**

The ideological belief structure of the various Neo-Salafi and other Islamist extremist groups is hard to characterize. They are far more political and military activists than theologians. As such, they are not puritans in the sense of Wahhabi, nor are they Salafis in the traditional sense of the word. While they are “Islamist,” they are not so much religious as committed to a violent struggle for their beliefs. Their foreign leaders and cadres have been created in past wars, and their Iraqi members have been created since the Coalition invasion of Iraq.

Religion has proven to be an important factor in the composition of these groups and extending their reach into the Iraqi population. There have been reports that some “nationalists” have joined ranks with these neo-Salafi groups in Iraq. Mowaffak Rubaie, Iraq’s National Security Advisor, was quoted as saying, “Religion is a strong motive. You are not going to find someone who is going to die for Ba’athists. But Salafists have a very strong message. If you use the Koran selectively, it could be a weapon of mass destruction.”1325

**An Addiction to Violence and Extremism**

The violent Sunni neo-Salafi and other Sunni Islamist extremist groups do, however, clearly differ from other Sunni insurgents in their willingness to use violence against non-combatants and the innocent and in their willingness to use violence against other Muslims. They are far more willing to use extreme methods of violence, like suicide bombs, against Shi’ite and Kurdish targets. They are equally willing to use these methods of attack against Iraqi officials and Iraqis in the military, security, and police services, and Iraqis of all religious and ethnic background that do not support them in their interpretation of jihad.
Moreover, some have been willing to act on the principle that ordinary Iraqi citizens can be sacrificed in a war fought in God’s cause. These Sunni Islamic extremists are fighting a war that extends throughout the world, not simply in Iraq, and their goals affect all Arab states and all of Islam.

It also seems clear that many such insurgents do not believe they have to “win” in Iraq, at least in any conventional sense of the term. They do not need to restore Sunni power or control, at least in the near term. Simply driving the US and its Coalition allies out of Iraq in a war of attrition is seen as a key goal and would be seen as a major strategic victory.

An outcome that left Iraq in a state of prolonged civil war, and forces a spreading conflict in Islam between Sunnis and other sects, and neo-Salafists and other Sunnis, is seen a prelude to a broader eschatological conflict they believe is inevitable and that God will ensure they win. They are not fighting a limited war -- at least in terms of their ultimate ends and means. Compromise is at best a temporary action forced upon them for the purposes of expediency.

True Neo-Salafis also seen the insurgency are part of a general war for the control and soul of Islam, rather than Iraq. If anything, they ultimately gain the most if the Sunni and Shi’ite worlds divide, if Iraq becomes the continuing scene of violence between the US and Arabs, if US forces remain tied down, and if their actions create as much regional instability as possible.

This means there are no clear limits to the willingness of some of the more extreme Sunni Arab insurgent elements to escalate, even if this means trying to drive the nation into a civil war they cannot win. They are also likely to escalate even further as their situation becomes more threatened.

Neo-Salafi extremist groups, such as that of Abu Musab Zarqawi are the main causes of suicide bombings and mass attacks on civilians, especially the ones directed against the Shi’ites. Zarqawi has been ambiguous in his permissibility of attacking other Muslims and has issued various statements, some of which sanction attacks on Iraqi Shi’ites, and others emphasizing that such casualties should be avoided. Such neo-Salafi extremists have used religious rhetoric effectively in Iraq, and have tried to link the conflict in Iraq to other Muslim struggles in Palestine, Chechnya, Afghanistan, and Kashmir. Their statements and recruitment tapes start with references to these conflicts and tie their “struggle” in Iraq as part of this worldwide Islam vs. the West conflict.

Such groups extend their commitment to violence to other Sunnis and Iraqis, although they differ over how willing they are to state this publicly. Until September of 2005, most Sunni Islamist extremist groups were generally careful to avoid any open claims of a split with Iraqis Shi’ites, and some cooperated with Sadr and his militia. Since, they have carried out mass attacks and bombings on Shi’ites, and they have repeatedly shown that they place few -- if any -- limits on the means of violence against those they regard as enemies of Islam.

From the viewpoint of negotiation and deterrence, this belief structure means that many cadres and leaders of such groups and cells cannot be persuaded, only defeated. Furthermore, they not only will remain alienated and violent --almost regardless of what the government and other Sunnis and Sunni insurgents do -- they will remain active diehards until they are rooted out, move on to new countries or areas if forced to disperse, and join other extreme Sunni Islamist movements if the ones they currently support are defeated.
Guessing at Their Strength

No one can reliably estimate how many such neo-Salafi extremists there are in the field. No one fully understands how many movements and cells are involved. It seems fairly clear, however, that such neo-Salafi groups are a driving force in the insurgency. It is also fairly clear that they are tactical and lethal in their violence in Iraq.

The most visible groups or names for a mix of affiliates including Sunni Islamist groups like Al Qa'ida and Ansar al Sunna, and more nationalist or "Ba'athist groups like the Victorious Army Group. More than 35 groups existed at various times. Their numbers include groups like the Supporters of the Sunni People. Some sources put the number at over 100, but these totals seem to include mere fronts and Sunni groups that are more secular or affiliated with the Ba'ath. The names include groups like the Men's Faith Brigade; the Islamic Anger, Al Baraa bin Malik Suicide Brigade; and the Tawid Lions of Abdullah ibn al Zobeir.

A study of Internet websites and postings by SITE found more than 100 groups existed in various proclamations and Sunni Islamist websites. Of these, SITE found that Al Qa’ida had 36 by Ansar al Sunna had 59. Another eight groups operated under the direction of the Victorious Army Group, and another five groups worked under the 20th of July Revolution Brigade. A study of Internet websites and postings by SITE found more than 100 groups existed in various proclamations and Sunni Islamist websites. Of these, SITE found that Al Qa’ida had 36 by Ansar al Sunna had 59. Another eight groups operated under the direction of the Victorious Army Group, and another five groups worked under the 20th of July Revolution Brigade. Another eight groups operated under the direction of the Victorious Army Group, and another five groups worked under the 20th of July Revolution Brigade.1326

Work by the Crisis Group found at least 14 largely neo-Salafi groups had web pages, and that large numbers of brigades and formations existed that had some degree of autonomy or independence. It also found that the major groups were loosely linked in an informal "Majlis," although it is unclear how real such a body is, how often it meets, or what it does.

The major groups do seem to have cadres of leaders, planners, financiers, and "armorers." These may or may not control a given operation; have jurisdiction over a given group of cells, or simply supply affiliates. It is clear that Al Qa'ida sometimes claims attacks are coordinated by different elements. For example, an October 24, 2005 attack on the Palestine and Sheraton Hotels in central Baghdad was claimed by the "Attack Brigade," the "Rockets Brigade," and "Al Baraa bin Malik Suicide Brigade." It was far from clear who was really involved. As these names indicate, some groups also seem to specialize in given type of attacks, and other on given types of targets. Some, for example, only seem to attack Coalition targets while others (the "Omar Brigade"?) attacks Iraqi elements such as the Badr Organization on the grounds they attack Sunnis.

Insurgent groups often act alone, or claim affiliation with other organizations. Some, such as the Ansar, or "Suicide" Brigade, create confusion because their name implies they are members of one group but claim affiliation with another. The Ansar Brigade claims claim an affiliation with Al Qa'ida in Mesopotamia. Al Qa'ida, however, openly associates itself with only some of the groups that claim affiliation with it.

The high degree of compartmentalization, isolation, and independence of such movements not only helps protect them and enables them to operate as informal distributed networks; it makes their strength fluid and extremely hard to estimate. As Bruce Hoffman of the Rand Corporation pointed out, "There is no center of gravity, no leadership, no hierarchy; they are more a constellation than an organization. They have adopted a structure that assures their longevity." Abdul Kareem al-Eniezi, the minister for national security, has said that, "The leaders usually don't have anything to do with details...Sometimes they will give the smaller groups a target, or a type of target. The groups aren't connected to each other. They are not that organized." 1328
When it comes to estimating the number of Neo-Salafi and other Sunni Islamist extremist groups relative to other insurgents, some experts guesstimate the number of Islamist extremist insurgents at as little 5-10 percent of the total insurgents without being able to say what base number they are a percent of, or distinguishing core insurgents from part timers or sympathizers.

As has been noted earlier, US experts and officers sometimes make reference to a total of 20,000 insurgents of all kinds, but such experts are among the first to state that these numbers are more nominal mid-points in a range of guesses than real estimates. Other experts estimate the total number of Sunni insurgents and active sympathizers insurgents of all kinds at totals from 15,000 to 60,000, with far larger numbers of additional passive sympathizers. These guesstimates would put the Sunni Islamist extremists at anywhere from 1,500 to 6,000.

Some estimates do put the total number of neo-Salafi Sunni extremists much higher. Anthony Lloyd of the London Times has stated that, "An intelligence summary, citing the conglomeration of insurgent groups under the al-Qa’ida banner to be the result of rebel turf wars, money, weaponry and fear, concluded that of the estimated 16,000 Sunni Muslim insurgents, 6,700 were hardcore Islamic fundamentalists who were now supplemented by a possible further 4,000 members after an amalgamation with Jaysh Muhammad, previously an insurgent group loyal to the former Ba’athist regime."

Given the difficulty in distinguishing core activists from part time or fringe activists, no one can discount such estimates. The fact is, however, that such estimates again highlight the level of uncertainty surrounding a number of key aspects of the insurgency

**Key Islamist Extremist Groups**

There is a broad consensus over which Islamist extremist groups are most important, but little consensus over their relative strength and power, and the nature of the smaller groups.

**The State Department Estimate**

While the various Sunni Islamist extremist groups are in a constant state of flux, the unclassified assessments in the US State Department Country Reports on Terrorism, provided the following description of the key Islamist groups as of April 2005:

Iraq remains the central battleground in the global war on terrorism. Former regime elements as well as foreign fighters and Islamic extremists continued to conduct terrorist attacks against civilians and non-combatants. These elements also conducted numerous insurgent attacks against Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces, which often had devastating effects on Iraqi civilians and significantly damaged the country’s economic infrastructure.

…Jordanian-born Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi and his organization emerged in 2004 to play a leading role in terrorist activities in Iraq. In October, the US Government designated Zarqawi’s group, Jama’at al Tawhid wa’al-Jihad, as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). In December, the designation was amended to include the group’s new name Tanzim Qa’idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (or “The al-Qa’ida Jihad Organization in the Land of the Two Rivers”) and other aliases following the “merger” between Zarqawi and Osama bin Laden’s al-Qa’ida organization. Zarqawi announced the merger in October, and in December, bin Laden endorsed Zarqawi as his official emissary in Iraq. Zarqawi’s group claimed credit for a number of attacks targeting Coalition and Iraqi forces, as well as civilians, including the October massacre of 49 unarmed, out-of-uniform Iraqi National Guard recruits. Attacks that killed civilians include the March 2004 bombing of the Mount Lebanon Hotel, killing seven and injuring over 30, and a December 24 suicide bombing using a fuel tanker that killed nine and wounded 19 in the al-Mansur district of Baghdad.
In February 2004, Zarqawi called for a “sectarian war” in Iraq. He and his organization sought to create a rift between Shi’a and Sunnis through several large terror attacks against Iraqi Shi’a. In March 2004, Zarqawi claimed credit for simultaneous bomb attacks in Baghdad and Karbala that killed over 180 pilgrims as they celebrated the Shi’a festival of Ashura. In December, Zarqawi also claimed credit for a suicide attack at the offices of Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), one of Iraq’s largest Shi’a parties, which killed 15 and wounded over 50.

Zarqawi has denied responsibility for another significant attack that same month in Karbala and Najaf, two of Shi’a Islam’s most holy cities, which killed Iraqi civilians and wounded more than 120. Terrorists operating in Iraq used kidnapping and targeted assassinations to intimidate Iraqis and third-country nationals working in Iraq as civilian contractors. Nearly 60 noncombatant Americans died in terrorist incidents in Iraq in 2004. Other American noncombatants were killed in attacks on coalition military facilities or convoys. In June, Zarqawi claimed credit for the car bomb that killed the chairman of the Coalition-appointed Iraqi Governing Council. In April, an American civilian was kidnapped and later beheaded. One month later, a video of his beheading was posted on an al-Qa’ida-associated website. Analysts believe that Zarqawi himself killed the American as well as a Korean hostage, kidnapped in June. Zarqawi took direct credit for the September kidnapping and murder of two American civilians and later their British engineer co-worker, and the October murder of a Japanese citizen.

In August, the Kurdish terrorist group Ansar al-Sunna claimed responsibility for the kidnapping and killing of 12 Nepalese construction workers, followed by the murder of two Turkish citizens in September. Many other foreign civilians have been kidnapped. Some have been killed, others released, some remain in their kidnappers’ hands, and the fate of others, such as the director of CARE, is unknown.

Other terrorist groups were active in Iraq. Ansar al-Sunna, believed to be an offshoot of the Ansar al-Islam group founded in Iraq in September 2001, first came to be known in April 2003 after issuing a statement on the Internet. In February 2004, Ansar al-Sunna claimed responsibility for bomb attacks on the offices of two Kurdish political parties in Irbil, which killed 109 Iraqi civilians. The Islamic Army in Iraq has also claimed responsibility for terrorist attacks. Approximately 3,800 disarmed persons remained resident at the former Mujahedeen-e Khalq (MeK) military base at Camp Ashraf; the MeK is a designated US Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). More than 400 members renounced membership in the organization in 2004. Forty-one additional defectors elected to return to Iran, and another two hundred were awaiting ICRC assistance for voluntary repatriation to Iran at the end of the year. PKK/ KADEK/Kongra Gel, a designated foreign terrorist group, maintains an estimated 3,000 to 3,500 armed militants in northern Iraq, according to Turkish Government sources and NGOs. In the summer of 2004, PKK/KADEK/Kongra Gel renounced its self-proclaimed cease-fire and threatened to renew its separatist struggle in both Turkey’s Southeast and urban centers. Turkish press subsequently reported multiple incidents in the Southeast of PKK/KADEK/Kongra Gel terrorist actions or clashes between Turkish security forces and PKK/KADEK/Kongra Gel militants.

The State Department report also provided a more detailed description of the role of Ansar al-Islam (AI) (a.k.a. Ansar al-Sunnah Partisans of Islam, Helpers of Islam, Kurdish Taliban): 1331

Ansar al-Islam (AI) is a radical Islamist group of Iraqi Kurds and Arabs who have vowed to establish an independent Islamic state in Iraq. The group was formed in December 2001. In the fall of 2003, a statement was issued calling all jihadists in Iraq to unite under the name Ansar al-Sunnah (AS). Since that time, it is likely that AI has posted all claims of attack under the name AS. AI is closely allied with al-Qa’ida and Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi’s group, Tanzim Qa’idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (QJBR) in Iraq. Some members of AI trained in al-Qa’ida camps in Afghanistan, and the group provided safe haven to al-Qa’ida fighters before Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Since OIF, AI has become one of the leading groups engaged in anti-Coalition attacks in Iraq and has developed a robust propaganda campaign.

AI continues to conduct attacks against Coalition forces, Iraqi Government officials and security forces, and ethnic Iraqi groups and political parties. AI members have been implicated in assassinations and assassination attempts against Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) officials and Coalition forces, and also work closely with both al-Qa’ida operatives and associates in QJBR. AI has also claimed responsibility for many high profile attacks, including the simultaneous suicide bombings of the PUK and Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) party offices in Ibril on February 1, 2004, and the bombing of the US military dining facility in Mosul on December 21, 2004.
Its strength is approximately 500 to 1,000 members, its location and area of operation is primarily central and northern Iraq... The group receives funding, training, equipment, and combat support from al-Qa’ida, QJBR, and other international jihadist backers throughout the world. AI also has operational and logistic support cells in Europe.

Other Estimates

Virtually all sources agree that two key Iraqi Islamist extremist groups include the one led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, first known as al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, or Unity and Holy War, and now known as Tandhim Qa’idat al-Jihan fi Bilad al-Rafidayn or as the al-Qa’ida of Jihad Organization in the Land of Two Rivers.

The second easily identifiable group with significant numbers of foreign volunteers is the offshoot of Ansar al-Islam, or Protectors of Islam, an Islamist group created in the Kurdish regions in September 2001, called Ansar al-Sunna, or Protectors of the Sunna Faith. Ansar suffered a joint attack from Kurdish and US forces in March 2003, forcing many of its fighters to scatter, possibly to Iran, before several allegedly settled in Mosul.

Two other groups, and their area of operation, include:\textsuperscript{1332}


  Al-Jibha al-Wataniya litahrial-'Iraq or the National Front for the Liberation of Iraq and which seems to be an umbrella for groups of Islamists and nationalist, namely the Islamic Army of Iraq, the Army of Mohammad, the Iraqi Resistance Front, the Iraqi Liberation Army, and the Awakening and Holy War: Fallujah, Samarra, and Basra

The Crisis Group Estimate

The Crisis Group believes that Sunni Islamist groups have come to dominate the insurgency and developed a list in early 2006, which it summarized as follows:\textsuperscript{1333}

- Tandhim al-Qa’ida fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (al-Qa’ida’s Organisation in Mesopotamia). Formerly al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (Monotheism and Jihad), the group has been shaped by the personality of its purported founder, Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi. The group claims to have 15 brigades or battalions (Katiba, plural Kata’ib) operating under its banner, including two “martyrs” brigades, of which one allegedly comprises exclusively Iraqi volunteers.

- Jaysh Ansar al-Sunna (Partisans of the Sunna Army).\textsuperscript{1334} The group reportedly is an offshoot of Jaysh Ansar al-Islam (the Partisans of Islam Army); a jihadi organisation previously based in Kurdistan and which by most accounts has ceased to operate in Iraq. (Tellingly, a group claiming affiliation with Jaysh Ansar al-Sunna, Jaysh al-Sunna wal-Jama’a publishes a magazine in Kurdish). The group claims to have some 16 brigades. It has committed some particularly violent attacks.

- Al-Jaysh al-Islami fil-'Iraq (the Islamic Army in Iraq). Thirteen brigades have claimed allegiance to this group. Again, the group’s highly Salafi discourse blends with a vigorously patriotic tone. It is widely seen both in Iraq and in the West as one of the armed groups that is more “nationalist” in character and more likely to turn away from armed struggle if a suitably inclusive political compromise is possible. The authors of the Crisis Group study disagree and argue that, “The perception that al-Jaysh al-Islami fil-'Iraq comprises chiefly former regime officers while Tandhim al-Qa’ida is a gathering of foreign militants is misleading. Undoubtedly, Tandhim has tapped into foreign volunteers who are ready to die, but the logistics of suicide attacks (smuggling, hosting, training, and equipping volunteers, gathering intelligence on targets, etc.) require solid rooting in Iraqi society and capabilities Iraqis alone can provide. The make-up of al-Jaysh al-Islami fil-'Iraq may well involve a core of experienced Iraqi officers and other members of the former regime, but unseasoned and devout combatants, as well as Iraqi salafi preachers with
connections throughout the Muslim world ought not be excluded. Indeed, such mixed composition, as well as cross dependencies (jihadists rely on local networks, and on international sources of finance and legitimacy), help explain in part the relative homogeneity in discourse.

- **Al-Jabha al-Islamiya lil-Muqawama al-'Iraqiya** (the Islamic Front of the Iraqi Resistance), known by its initials as *Jami‘* (mosque or gathering). This group could be more akin to a “public relations organ” shared between different armed groups, rather than an armed group in itself. Issuing regular, weekly updates of claimed attacks, it also has a comprehensive website and publishes a lengthy, monthly magazine also called *Jami‘*. Deeply nationalistic, but with a slight Salafi taint, its discourse counts among the more sophisticated of the groups.

- **Jaysh al-Rashidin** (the First Four Caliphates Army). As many as six brigades reportedly operate under its banner. The group issues regular updates on its activities and of late has recently set up a website.

- **Jaysh al-Ta‘ifa al-Mansoura** (the Victorious Group’s Army). At least three brigades are known to have pledged alliance to this group, which also issues weekly updates.

- **Jaysh al-Mujahidin** (the Mujahidin’s Army). This group too puts out weekly updates and operates a website, which was briefly shut down and suspended in December 2005.

- **Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya fil-'Iraq** (the Islamic Resistance’s Movement in Iraq), which at some stage *Kata’ib Thawrati ‘Ashrin* (the 1920 Revolution Brigades) appears to have joined.

- **Jaysh Muhammad** (Muhammad’s Army), which issues periodic communiqués and videos focusing on IED attacks in the Anbar governorate.

- **‘Asa’ib Ahl al-‘Iraq** (the Clans of the People of Iraq).

- **Saraya Al-Ghadhab Al-Islami** (the Islamic Anger Brigades)

- **Saraya Usud Al-Tawhid** (the Lions of Unification Brigades)

- **Saraya Suyuf al-Haqq** (the Swords of Justice Brigades). This group took responsibility for the November 2005 kidnapping of four peace activists from the Christian Peacemaking Team. Its origins and affiliation remain murky, although it claims to operate under the banner of *Jaysh al-Sunna wal-Jama‘a*, a recent offshoot of *Jaysh Ansar al-Sunna*.

It is important to note that the Crisis Group created this list largely on the basis of the public statements by various insurgent groups, and that the groups differed significantly in history and credibility. The first five groups were seen as having significant operational status. The second four consisted of groups that took credit for military actions but which tended to use far less elaborate and stable channels of communication than the above four, although their public statements showed beliefs similar to those of *al-Jaysh al-Islami* and *Jami‘*. The last four groups “lack regular means of communication and rely instead on periodic claims of responsibility through statements or videos.”

The Crisis Group also had counted some 50 different brigades by December 2005, that had carried out military action or terrorist attacks under the name of one major group or the other. It reported that, “In traditional Arab military parlance, a brigade comprises from 100 to 300 men, which would add up to a total of roughly 5,000 to 15,000 insurgents.”

By the time the Crisis Group issued the report in February 2006, none of these groups made formal attacks on Shi‘ite sectarianism, but virtually all of the active groups did repeatedly attack Shi‘ite targets. All made repeated efforts to establish their credibility by providing detailed on military and terrorist operations. They acted out of “Islamic honor” and tended to downplay or ignore their worst actions, they attacked US and Iraqi government actions for crimes and
atrocities, and accused the Shi’ites and Kurds of sectarian and ethnic separatism – ignoring their own focus on Shi’ite and Kurdish targets. It was the Shi’ites and not the Kurds, however, which they generally accused of using death squads, committing crimes, and fighting “dirty wars.”

In practical terms, however, there seemed to be no clear limits to the willingness of the more extreme Sunni Arab insurgent elements to escalate, even if this meant trying to drive the nation into a civil war they could not win. As a result, some are likely to escalate even further as their situation becomes more threatened. It seems almost certain that many cadres and leaders of such groups and cells cannot be persuaded, only defeated. Some non-Islamist extremist groups will remain alienated almost regardless of what the government and other Sunnis do, and will move on to join the most extreme Islamist movements.
IX. Al Qa’ida in the Two Rivers and the “Zarqawi Factor”

Zarqawi’s *Tandhim Qa’idat al-Jihan fi Bilad al-Rafidayn*, or al-Qa’ida of Jihad Organization in the Land of Two Rivers, is only one Sunni Islamist extremist insurgent group. Views differ regarding the size of al-Qa’ida of Jihad Organization in the Land of Two Rivers, how much control is exercised by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the depth of its ties to Bin Laden and Al Qa’ida, how many of its current “fighters” are Iraqi versus non-Iraqi, and how many other Islamist extremist groups exist.

Other differences exist over how independent al-Qa’ida of Jihad Organization in the Land of Two Rivers is of Bin Laden and the central organization of Al Qa’ida under his control. Zarqawi is reported to have had significant ideological and personal differences with Bin Laden in Afghanistan, and the organization was started without formal ties to Al Qa’ida. Zarqawi acknowledged an affiliation with Bin Laden and Al Qa’ida only after his organization in Iraq had already achieved significant status and when he needed outside support. Even then, however, he gave himself the title of "Emir" to establish his separate status as a leader.

Most experts feel that al-Qa’ida of Jihad Organization in the Land of Two Rivers has never made up much more than 10-12% of the core insurgency, and a substantially smaller percentage of total supporters including active sympathizers and part times. There is no question, however, that al-Qa’ida and Zarqawi committed some of the most extreme and violent acts during the course of the insurgency and sought to push Iraq towards civil war. They also became names that dominated much of the reporting on the Islamist extremist aspects of the insurgency.

A number of other Iraq groups have claimed affiliation with Zarqawi and Al Qa’ida in the Two Rivers since early 2004, but it is unknown how closely tied many of these groups are to Zarqawi. It is likely that some of them either only claim him as an inspiration, or operate as almost totally independent groups and cells. This seems to include a number of elements organized along tribal lines.

It is too soon to know just how much Zarqawi’s death in early June will change Al Qa’ida’s role in the insurgency, how effective his successor will be, or how well Al Qa’ida in the Two Rivers will survive the series of Coalition attacks of which Zarqawi’s death was only a part.

**Al Qa’ida’s Organizational Structure and Its Strength**

There is no consensus over how al Qa’ida has organized its operations in Iraq, or over how its structure has changed over time. It has clearly had to evolve because so many of its leaders have been killed and captured, and the Coalition and Iraqi forces have steadily improved their intelligence and methods of attack.

On November 10, 2005 the Coalition released a diagram (Figure VII.1) showing the makeup of the Zarqawi network. At a news conference describing the US military’s progress in capturing Zarqawi operatives, Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch told reporters:

> The insurgency is broken into three groups: terrorists and foreign fighters, Iraqi rejectionists and Saddamists. We believe that the terrorists and foreign fighters are the most lethal group of the insurgency. And it is indeed an organized group, and the face of that group is Zarqawi -- al Qa’ida in Iraq…

> Over the last several months, we've been able to kill or capture over 100 members of al Qa’ida in Iraq. Since I've talked to you about this graphic last, we have indeed taken out one additional tier-one member.
Reminder: tier one is those people who have direct access to Zarqawi. They are Zarqawi's lieutenants. They are his trusted advisers. They have visibility in al Qa’ida operations not just in Iraq but also across the entire Middle East. And when Zarqawi loses a tier-one member, he’s losing one of his most trusted advisers. The Ramadi military leader was killed in an operation in Ramadi a week ago, Abu Abdullah, along with 12 additional terrorists. So one more tier-one individual killed.

Tier two: tier-two leadership plans and facilitates operations in a region of Iraq. They are responsible for flow of money, for flow of information, for flow of munitions, and flow of foreign fighters. Since we talked last, two additional tier-two members have been killed or captured, both in Mosul -- the emir of Mosul and the chief of Mosul security. Since we talked last, 15 additional tier-three members have been killed or captured. These are the individuals who control cells, local cells -- both Iraqis and foreign fighters -- serving as cell leaders.

Figure VII.1 lists 38 “Tier 2” and 71 “Tier 3” operatives killed or captured. According to the US military, the influence of foreign fighters was most predominant in the tier-three. Speaking about the new developments, Lynch said: “we have great success at killing or capturing his leaders, his cell leaders, his coordinators and his lieutenants, and this chart just continues to expand, and eventually, he’s going to be on this chart.”

Manpower does not seem to have been a critical problem in spite of Coalition successes. Zarqawi seems to have been able to recruit more volunteers after the fighting in Fallujah, and substantially more volunteers for suicide bombings after the January 30, 2005 elections brought a Shi’ite and Kurdish dominated government to power. The same has been true since the offensives in western Iraq later in 2005.

It is not clear whether such recruiting has strengthened his movement, or simply helped to cope with the constant attrition caused by MNF-I and Iraqi attacks. A number of experts feel al-Qa’ida probably totals less than 2,000 full and part time men -- including both Iraqis and foreigners -- and probably with a core strength of no more than several hundred.

The overall role of foreign fighters is described in more detail later in this analysis, but they have clearly played an important role in al-Qa’ida. In the spring of 2004, US officials estimated that there might be a core strength of fewer than 1,000 foreign fighters in Iraq or as many as 2,000. A few press estimates went as high as 10,000 before the fighting in Fallujah, but seemed to be sharply exaggerated. It seems likely that the cadres of foreign volunteers in al-Qa’ida have been well under 500 men.

The number of foreign volunteers with ties to al-Qa’ida detained by the Coalition and Iraqi government has remained relatively low. However, some MNSTC-I and Iraqi experts felt in early that so many volunteers were coming in across the Syrian and other borders that the total was rapidly increasing. This helped make improving border security a top Coalition and Iraqi government priority in January and February 2005, and a factor in a major Marine offensive in the Syrian border area in May 2005.
Figure VII.1: Zarqawi’s Network in 2005

Zarqawi Ties to Bin Laden and Outside Sunni Islamist Groups

Al Qa’ida in Iraq has strengthened its ties to outside terrorist groups. As has been noted earlier, Zarqawi did not originally affiliate himself with Bin Laden or Al Qa’ida. In October 2004, however, Zarqawi publicly pledged allegiance to Bin Laden and changed the name of his organization from Al Tawhid wal Jihad (Unity and Holy War) to Al Qa’ida in the Land of the Two Rivers. While there is no evidence that the two men have ever met or even directly communicated, Bin Laden issued a statement in December 2004 confirming Zarqawi as the “Emir” of Al Qa’ida in Iraq.

This linkage is part of a broader process of affiliation. Movements like the Army of Ansar al-Sunna, which claimed responsibility for the attack on the US mess tent in Mosul in December 2004 and for many other suicide attacks, seem to have a mix of links to Al Qa’ida. Ansar seems to be largely Iraqi, but it mix of Sunnis and Kurds is uncertain, as is the extent to which the current group and its cells are a direct legacy of Ansar al-Islam – an active Islamist group that reportedly provided sanctuary for Zarqawi before the war. In November 2004, Ansar al-Sunna said that it had twice collaborated with Zarqawi’s group and another group known as the Islamic Army in Iraq.

In February 2005, a leaked US intelligence memo indicated that an intercepted communication, reportedly from bin Laden to Zarqawi, encouraged Iraqi insurgents to attack the American homeland. Even so, US intelligence analysts view bin Laden and Zarqawi as separate operators, and it remains unclear as to what – if any – organizational or financial support Bin Laden provides Zarqawi’s organization.

According to US intelligence officials, Zarqawi has surpassed Bin Laden in raising funds: “Right now, Zarqawi is fighting the war, and [Bin Laden] is not…who would you give money to?” But a Justice Department official downplayed the money issue, saying:

> It’s not like John Gotti running around Manhattan in fancy suits and limousines…We are talking about a man who is operating in an area that is extremely primitive, in a very clandestine manner and with a huge network of people that do his communications for him and surround him and protect him.

Zarqawi’s financial independence from Bin Laden was seemingly confirmed in a 2005 letter to Zarqawi purported to be from Al Qa’ida’s No. 2, Ayman Al Zawahiri. In the letter, discussed in detail below, Zawahiri asks Zarqawi to send funds to the Al Qa’ida leadership.

Another “Zarqawi letter,” written on April 27, 2005 by one of his associates (Abu Asim al Quasayami al Yemeni), seemed to reflect Zarqawi’s complaints about the failure of some of his volunteers to martyr themselves. This was typical of the kind of complaints he has used both to try to lever more support from Bin Laden and gain more support from Arabs outside Iraq.

Zarqawi and Attacks on Sunnis and Civilians

Some analysts believe that Bin Laden made a strategic error by declaring Zarqawi the “emir” for operations in Iraq. Iraqis are deeply distrusting of outsiders and, in particular, neighbors in the region. Bin Laden’s declaration could be seen by Iraqis in highly nationalistic terms as a Saudi ordering a Jordanian to kill Iraqis. These analysts believe that this will motivate those Iraqis who were previously weary of the political process, to offer their support to the elected government.
Zarqawi made occasional efforts to remake his organization’s reputation to reduce tensions with Iraqi Sunnis, and possibly Iraqi Shi’ites as well. Al Qa’ida website pronouncements stated that the group had tried to avoid Muslim casualties with the notable exception being the Iraq military and security forces. They quickly denounced attacks on civilians like the massive suicide car bombing in Hilla in March 2005.\textsuperscript{1344}

Zarqawi did, however, consistently advocate attacks on Shi’ites and said he viewed them as apostates. It was clear that many bloody suicide bombings and other attacks had support from elements loyal to Zarqawi, and that many were sectarian attacks on Shi’ites or ethnic attacks on Kurds. US military analysts believed that by the spring of 2006, Zarqawi’s organization carried out 90\% of all suicide attacks in Iraq.\textsuperscript{1345} It is now unclear if any Shi’ite element, including many of Sadr’s supporters, is willing to cooperate with such Sunni extremist groups.

A tape attributed to Zarqawi in May 2005, was anything but reticent.\textsuperscript{1346} In the one hour and 14 minute tape, he explained why Muslim civilians were being killed in his attacks and justified the killing on the basis of research by “Abu Abdullah al Muhajer”. He reported that many operations were cancelled because they were going to kill large numbers of Muslims, but mistakes were made and “we have no choice…it’s impossible to fight the infidels without killing some Muslims.” He stated that Muslims were killed in 9/11, and attacks in Riyadh, Nairobi, and Tanzania. He added that if these were considered illegitimate then it would mean stopping jihad in every place.

He said that Iraq’s geography made direct combat with the enemy difficult, and the only way around this was to intensify combat through suicide operations. He contrasted Iraqi terrain to Afghanistan’s mountains and to Chechnya’s woods, where it was easier for the “mujahedeen” to have a safe place to hide and plan after fighting with the enemy.

He stated that it was difficult for the “mujahedeen” to move in Iraq because of the checkpoints and the US bases. Suicide operations were easier to carry out, more efficient, and could effectively force the enemy to leave the cities for places where it would be easier to shoot them. “These operations are our weapon...If we stop them jihad will be weaker...If the enemy gets full control of Baghdad it will implement its plan and control the whole nation. The whole world saw what they did in Abu Ghraib, Camp Bucca and prisons in Qut, Najaf and Karbala...that’s when they did not have full control, so what would happen if they do?”

Zarqawi said his group never attacked other sects in Iraq who are not considered Muslims, but fought the Shi’ites because they assist the enemy and are traitors. According to Zarqawi, the Shi’ites only pretend they care about civilian casualties. He also stated there was a plan to eliminate the Sunnis in Iraq, and that Sunni mosques were being handed over to Shi’ites and that Sunni clerics, teachers, doctors and experts were being killed. He said that Sunni women were being kidnapped and that Shi’ite police participated in raping women at Abu Ghraib.

He added that there were widespread abuses at Iraqi government-run prisons. These accusations included prison in Qut which he said was being run by Iranian intelligence and a prison in Hilla run by a Shi’ite major called Qays (evidently Major General Qays Hamza, chief of al Hillah police), who “cuts Muslims’ bodies and rapes women.” He mentioned a specific story where Qays threatened to rape the wife of one of the fighters. He said his fighters unsuccessfully tried to kill Qays. In fact, there was a web statement dated March 30\textsuperscript{th} about a suicide bombing in Hilla that targeted Major General Qays.\textsuperscript{1347}
Another tape -- attributed to Zarqawi -- was aired on July 6, 2005. In the tape, Zarqawi reaffirmed that targeting Iraqis is legitimate and he dubbed the Iraqi security forces apostates. He called on Iraqi clerics who disapprove of targeting Iraqis to reconsider their views.

The Jordanian asserted in the message that the US went to war with Iraq in order to advance Israel’s interests and refers to the conflict in Iraq as a ‘quagmire.’ He declared that the US will soon invade the lands of Sham (Greater Syria) on the pretext of stopping insurgent infiltration, and that this had not yet happen only due to the ferocity of the militant attacks. He also announced the creation of a new brigade charged with killing the members of the Failaq Brigade, a Shi’ite militia.

On September 14, 2005, Al Qa’ida in Iraq released another audiotape by Zarqawi. On the tape, which surfaced on a day when insurgent attacks killed more than 150 people and wounded more than 500, Zarqawi declared “all out war” against Shi’ite Muslims in Iraq.

In a letter released earlier in the day, the organization said the upsurge in violence was in response to the ongoing US operation against insurgents in Tal Afar. Zarqawi accused the US military and Shi’ites of using poisonous gas and raping women in Tal Afar and appealed to Iraqi sects to renounce the Al-Jaafari government and its crimes. Zarqawi also threatened violence against Coalition troops and Iraqi government officials, calling on them to “come out of their lairs in the Green Zone.”

Zarqawi’s declaration began: 1348

Days go by, and events follow one after the other. The battles are many, and the names used are varied. But the goal is one: a Crusader-Rafidite [a derogatory term for Shia] war against the Sunnis. …

The interests of the Crusaders have converged with the desires of their brothers, the hate-filled Rafidites, and the outcome was these crimes and massacres against the Sunnis-from Al-Falluja to al-Madain, Al-Diyala, Al-Samarra, and Al-Mosul, through Al-Ramadi, Hit, Haditha, Al-Rawa, Al-Qaim and other places, and recently-but not last-at Tel’afar…

This is an organized sectarian war, whose details were carefully planned against the will of those whose vision has been blinded and whose hearts have been hardened by Allah. Beware, oh Sunni scholars-has your sons’ blood become so cheap in your eyes that you have sold it for a low price? Has the honor of your women become so trivial in your eyes? Beware. Have you not heard that many of your chaste and pure sisters from among the Sunnis of Tel’afar had their honor desecrated, their chastity slaughtered, and their wombs filled with the sperm of the Crusaders and of their brothers, the hate-filled Rafidites? Where is your religion? Moreover, where is your sense of honor, your zeal, and your manliness?

According to Zarqawi, the timing of the operation in Tal Afar had been planned to “cover up the scandal of Allah’s enemy, Bush, in his dealing with what was left behind by one of Allah’s soldiers--the devastating Hurricane Katrina.” 1349 Zarqawi also said that US forces numbering 4,000 and Iraqi forces numbering 6,000 converged on Tal Afar in order to do battle with a “small group of believers, which number[ed] no more than a few hundred.”

In the speech, Zarqawi singled out Iraqi government officials and members of the Iraqi security forces, as well as other “collaborators” for denunciation: 1350

Behold the Rafidites’ lackey, [Iraqi Defense Minister] Sa’doon Al-Dulaimi, may Allah keep him miserable, bragging about their victories at Tel’afar. If only I knew what victory they are talking about-these cowards, none of whom dares to leave his lair unless he is shielded by the women of the Marines. Does this traitor believe that bombing houses, with women and children inside, constitutes a victory? By Allah, what a miserable victory…
This lackey [Al-Dulaimi], who betrayed his religion and his nation, and agreed to serve as a tool of the Crusaders and Safavids threatens that he and his angels of destruction are advancing towards Al-Anbar, Al-Qaim, Rawatha and Samarra. To him we say that the mujahdeen have prepared for you and for your soldiers, by Allah’s virtues, a slashing sword and lethal poison. Allah willing, you will be given to drink from the various goblets of death, and the lands of the Sunnis will contain your rotting corpses. Come, if you want, now or later.

…Whoever is proven to belong to the Pagan [National] Guard, to the police, or to the army, or whoever is proven to be a Crusader collaborator or spy-he shall be killed. Furthermore, his house shall either be destroyed or burned down, after the women and children are taken out of it. This is his reward for betraying his religion and his nation, so that he shall serve as a clear lesson and a preventive warning to others.

…Any tribe, party, or association that has been proven to collaborate with the Crusaders and their apostate lackeys-by God, we will target them just like we target the Crusaders, we will eradicate them and disperse them to the winds.

The Zarqawi “War” Against Shi’ites

Zarqawi is scarcely the only Sunni Islamist extremist to denounce Shi’ites for betraying Iraq and fighting “dirty wars,” and the previous chapters have traced a broad pattern of attacks designed to divide Iraq along sectarian and ethnic lines and provoke a more intense civil war. Most Sunni Islamist groups have, however, generally avoided open attacks on Shi’ites and other sects.

Zarqawi went further in ways that may have alienated as many Iraqis as it intimidated, and produced a serious backlash among some of his supporters. His September 2005 statement ended with a declaration of “total war” against Iraq’s Shi’ites:1351

This is a call to all the Sunnis in Iraq: Awaken from your slumber, and arise from your apathy. You have slept for a long time. The wheels of the war to annihilate the Sunnis have not and will not halt. It will reach the homes of each and every one of you, unless Allah decides otherwise. If you do not join the mujahdeen to defend your religion and honor, by Allah, sorrow and regret will be your lot, but only after all is lost.

Based on all that I have mentioned, and after the world has come to know the truth about this battle and the identity of its true target, the Al-Qa’ida organization in the Land of the Two Rivers has decided: First, since the government of the descendant of Ibn Al-’Alqami and the servant of the Cross, Ibrahim Al-Ja’fari, has declared a total war against the Sunnis in Tel’afar, Ramadi, Al-Qaim, Samarra, and Al-Rawa, under the pretext of restoring rights and eliminating the terrorists, the organization has decided to declare a total war against the Rafidite Shi’ites throughout Iraq, wherever they may be….

This provoked a major reaction. Immediately following the release of the statement, Shi’ite leaders and journalists called upon Iraqi Sunnis to condemn Zarqawi’s declaration. One of them, Abdulhadi al-Darraji, a representative of Moqtada al-Sadr, insisted that the Sunni Muslim Clerics Association “issue a fatwa (religious edict) forbidding Muslims from joining these groups that deem others infidels.”1352

Sunni responses to Zarqawi’s declaration of war against the Shia were mixed, but largely negative. Some leaders did accept Darraji’s call for a Sunni rejection of Zarqawi. The Association of Muslim Scholars (AMS) in Iraq called on Zarqawi to renounce violence against Shi’ites and Sunnis in Iraq who were involved in the political process, saying: “Al-Zarqawi must retract his threats because they hurt jihad and would cause the shedding of the blood of more innocent Iraqis.”1353 The Muslim Clerics Association also urged Zarqawi to retract his statement. The most surprising response came from a gathering of members of the Salafi Higher Committee for Da’wah, Guidance, and Fatwa, who rejected Zarqawi’s declaration as “unacceptable” and said the spilling of Muslim blood was religiously forbidden.1354
Zarqawi reacted to these calls by retracting part of his earlier statement. On September 19, 2005, he issued another statement as a follow-up to his declaration of war, saying: “It has become known to our group that some sects, such as the Sadr group...and others, have not taken part in the massacres and not helped the occupier.... So we have decided not to hurt these groups in any way, as long as they do not strike us.” But Zarqawi accused six Shi’ite and Kurdistan groups (Al-Dawa Party, The Higher Revolutionary Party, National Conference Party, Al-Wifaq Party, Kurdistan Democratic Party, and Kurdistan United National Party) of helping the US occupation forces and said attacks against them would continue.

“Overkill” Against Fellow Muslims and the “Iraqization” of Al Qa’ida

Zarqawi’s retraction was seen by some as a sign of a rupture between his group and other insurgents. In the summer of 2005, a statement allegedly written by Zarqawi revealed a strained relationship with the militant Islamist preacher (and former cellmate of Zarqawi’s) Islam Mohammed al-Barqawi. Zarqawi had long been identified with Al-Barqawi, also known as Abu Mohammed al-Maqdisi, and often referred to him as his ‘sheik’ and spiritual guide.

In an interview with Al Jazeera television in July, Al-Barqawi admonished Zarqawi, saying suicide bombings in Iraq had resulted in the deaths of too many Iraqis and that the militants should not target Shi’ite Muslims. Zarqawi’s statement was a direct response to al-Barqawi’s interview. In it, he questioned al-Barqawi’s statements and implored the preacher to not ‘turn against the Mujahedeen.’

If authentic, the posting seems likely to confirm what Zarqawi’s letter to Bin Laden suggested: that support Zarqawi expected to come forth in Iraq and the Middle East has yet to materialize on the scale he envisioned. Moreover, the posting against Barqawi and the partial retraction of the declaration of war against Shi’ites suggests that Al Qa’ida in Iraq’s leadership is sensitive to Muslim public opinion. New York University professor of Islamic Studies Bernard Haykel believes Zarqawi’s war on Shi’ites is deeply unpopular in some quarters of his own movement and is contributing to a schism within the jihadi movement.

Further evidence appeared in October 2005 when the US government published a letter purported to be from Ayman Al Zawahiri to Zarqawi. In the letter, dated July 9, 2005, Zawahiri asks for news from Iraq and urges Zarqawi’s organization to think about their long-term strategic objectives. Calling the struggle in Iraq “the place for the greatest battle of Islam in this era,” Zawahiri writes:

…we must think for a long time about our next steps and how we want to attain it, and it is my humble opinion that the Jihad in Iraq requires several incremental goals:

The first stage: Expel the Americans from Iraq.

The second stage: Establish an Islamic authority or emirate, then develop it and support it until it achieves the level of a caliphate-over as much territory as you can to spread its power in Iraq, i.e. in Sunni areas, is in order to fill the void stemming from the departure of the Americans, immediately upon their exit and before un-Islamic forces attempt to fill this void, whether those whom the Americans will leave behind them, or those among the un-Islamic forces who will try to jump at taking power...

The third stage: Extend the jihad wave to the secular countries neighboring Iraq.

The fourth stage: It may coincide with what came before: the clash with Israel, because Israel was established only to challenge any new Islamic entity.
After having outlined the four stages of the conflict, Zawahiri addressed the group’s level of popular support. Zawahiri said the organization’s goals “will not be accomplished by the mujahed movement while it is cut off from public support.” Moreover, maintaining and increasing public support was “a decisive factor between victory and defeat,” in the absence of which the Islamic mujahed movement would be “crushed in the shadows” and the struggle between the Jihadist elite and the authorities “confined to prison dungeons far from the public and the light of day.” Zawahiri urged Zarqawi to avoid any action that Iraqis did not understand or approve and to involve them in his planning by “bring[ing] the mujahed movement to the masses and not conduct[ing] the struggle far from them.”

Zawahiri also warned that the scenes of slaughter emerging from Iraq were having a damaging effect on the wider jihadi movement. He warned Zarqawi, “more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media…[W]e are in a media battle in a race for the hearts and minds of our Umma.”

He also said the following about targeting Shi’ites:

…many of your Muslim admirers amongst the common folk are wondering about your attacks on the Shia. The sharpness of this questioning increases when the attacks are on one of their mosques…My opinion is that this matter won’t be acceptable to the Muslim populace however much you have tried to explain it, and aversion to this will continue.

Indeed, questions will circulate among mujahedeen circles and their opinion makers about the correctness of this conflict with the Shia at this time. Is it something that is unavoidable? Or, is it something can be put off until the force of the mujahed movement in Iraq gets stronger? And if some of the operations were necessary for self-defense, were all of the operations necessary? Or, were there some operations that weren’t called for? And is the opening of another front now in addition to the front against Americans and the government a wise decision? Or, does this conflict with the Shia lift the burden from the Americans by diverting the mujahedeen to the Shia, while the Americans continue to control matters from afar? And if the attacks on Shia leaders were necessary to put a stop to their plans, then why were there attacks on ordinary Shia? Won’t this lead to reinforcing false ideas in their minds, even as it is incumbent on us to preach the call of Islam to them and explain and communicate to guide them to the truth? And can the mujahedeen kill all of the Shia in Iraq? Has any Islamic state in history ever tried that? And why kill ordinary Shia considering that they are forgiven because of their ignorance? ….And do the brothers forget that both we and the Iranians need to refrain from harming each other at this time in which the Americans are targeting us?

Zawahiri’s final theme in his thirteen-page letter was the issue of political versus military action. Zawahiri stressed the need for Zarqawi to “direct the political action equally with the military action” and suggests that in addition to force, “there be an appeasement of Muslims and a sharing with them in governance.” Once more, Zawahiri cautioned the Al Qa’ida in Iraq leader about the use of excessively violent acts saying they risked alienating the Muslim masses, whose enthusiasm is critical to the overall success of the enterprise.

The letter, which seems to reflect the strategic perspective of the broader Al Qa’ida leadership, was the clearest blueprint of Al Qa’ida’s plans for Iraq yet. Less than a week after the US released the letter, however, Al Qa’ida in Iraq issued a statement on an Islamist website rejecting the letter’s authenticity. Their statement read: “We in Al Qa’ida Organization announce that there is no truth to these claims, which are only based on the imagination of the politicians of the Black [i.e. White] House and their slaves.”

As with most other Al Qa’ida statements though, US experts were divided over the authenticity of the letter. The Congressional Research Service’s Kenneth Katzman said the letter contained
elements that raised doubts about its authenticity: “The purported letter has Zawahiri admitting to certain things that it’s not realistic for him to admit, because he would know there’s a potential this letter might be intercepted.” Others, like Mike Scheuer, a retired CIA analyst, disagreed and said the letter was most likely authentic.1365

Al Qa'ida in Mesopotamia’s media response following the November 9 bombings in Amman (discussed below) was unusual in that the group issued three statements relatively quickly. One frequent commentator to a jihadi website complained Al Qa'ida had been too hasty in issuing the statements, including the claim of responsibility, alerting Jordanian officials to the fact that there might have been a fourth bomber, as well as a husband and wife team, involved in the attack.

Criticism of Zarqawi’s attack was apparent on other Internet jihadi websites. Postings on websites showed that the killing of “innocent Muslims” upset Zarqawi’s traditional base of supporters and sympathizers. Many criticized the selection of the target, the timing of the attack as well as the means of the attack. Some even urged the Al Qa'ida in Mesopotamia leader to abandon any future military operations that might harm Muslims. One such posting by a writer calling himself “Al-Murshid” or “the guide” read:1366

This is both a (religious) task and a pragmatic tactic…Acts where many innocent Muslims lose their lives make us lose a lot of popular support…The death of the innocent Muslims in this attack…was a fact that lived with each Jordanian. Now people say al-Qa'ida kills innocent Muslims.

The backlash against Zarqawi’s group in the aftermath of the Amman bombings and the declaration of war against Shi’ites point to an on-going and not yet resolved internal dispute among the jihadists as to their tactics, specifically whether or not the group should target civilians and/or fellow Muslims. At least for public consumption, al-Qa’ida in Iraq had to downplay Zarqawi’s role, put an Iraqi “Emir” in his place as at least the official leader, and seek to make al-Qa’ida seem to be a more Iraqi and less Shi’ite organization. How real such efforts were, and what will happen now Zarqawi is dead, is a different issue.

The Mujahedeen Shura

The Mujahedeen Shura, created in January 2006, which combined al-Qa’ida in Iraq with five other insurgent groups, appointed an Iraqi named Abdullah Rashid al-Baghdadi as its head. In the months that followed, it curtailed its claims of attacks against Iraqi civilians and cooled its rhetoric against Shi’ites.1367

Again, experts and analysts differed over whether to interpret this as a shift in tactics or a change in strategy. Some US officials acknowledged that there was no way to tell whether this council, or its leaders such as al-Baghdadi, even existed. One intelligence analyst indicated that it was simply the latest piece of propaganda by al-Qa’ida: “It’s a shift in tactics, not a real change.”1368

Others, such as Bruce Hoffman, a terrorism expert at RAND, suggested that the organization and its affiliates were real, but cast doubt on the assertion by Zarqawi that he had abdicated control of al-Qa’ida in Iraq.1369

The true role of Zarqawi in Iraq had been further complicated by US and Iraqi government efforts magnify his influence and stature as a terrorist operating in Iraq. This psychological campaign, aimed primarily at the Iraqi people, sought to drive a wedge between Zarqawi’s network and other Iraqis and insurgent groups by portraying him as a foreign terrorist whose tactics included killing Iraqi civilians and destroying the country’s infrastructure. Playing off
Iraqi nationalism and xenophobia, this effort was characterized by some within US military headquarters in Iraq as “the most successful information campaign to date.”

Other factors have complicated assessments of Zarqawi’s role, and his relationship with al-Qaeda. One of particular interest was a tape of al-Zawahiri posted to the Internet in April 2006 which praised Zarqawi and urged Iraqi insurgents to remain united behind him: “The Nation of Islam, I ask you to support your brothers, the mujahideen in Iraq, and our brother, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, about whom I didn’t see anything but good things the whole period I knew him…Your enemy is now dizzy, and do not stop fighting until he is defeated by the grace of God.”

The tape however, appears to have been made in November 2005. This was months after Zawahiri is alleged to have written a letter advising Zarqawi to curb his attacks against Shi’ites and reminding him that the battle is one for the hearts and minds of Muslims. It also was posted at a time when it appeared Zarqawi was keeping a lower profile and has placed al-Qaeda in Iraq under an umbrella organization referred to as the Mujahedeen Shura.

**Expanding the Battle: Operations Outside Iraq**

It is too early to generalize about how much of Zarqawi’s influence outside Iraq will survive his death, but he showed he could orchestrate a number of attacks in Jordan, and discussed broadening his operations to include other Arab and Islamic countries.

These efforts, however, may be more a matter of Zarqawi’s personal ambition and a pre-Iraq war agenda than a real effort to broaden the war. Zarqawi is a Jordanian who served a seven-year sentence for efforts to overthrow the Jordanian government, and began to attack targets in Jordan long before he went to Iraq. These attacks against Jordanian targets included:

- January 17, 1998: Masked men raid a dinner party at the hillside mansion of wealthy Iraqi businessmen in Amman, slitting the throats of a top Baghdad diplomat and seven other people.
- October 28, 2002: An American diplomat, Laurence Foley, is assassinated in front of his house in Amman, gunned down in the first such attack on a US diplomat in decades.
- August 7, 2003: A car bomb explodes outside the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad, killing at least 17 people, including two children. More than 50 people are wounded.
- August 19, 2005: Attackers fire at least three rockets from the hills above the Jordanian port city of Aqaba, with one narrowly missing a US Navy ship docked in the port and another hitting a taxis outside an airport in nearby Israel. A Jordanian soldier is killed.

**Attacks on Jordan**

It is not clear exactly when Zarqawi and other insurgents began to consider attacking such targets outside Iraq. There are indications that Zarqawi’s group began planning and attempting attacks outside Iraq in late 2003. It is clear that one major attempt did occur in the spring of 2004. Jordan reported that a Zarqawi agent named Azmi al-Jayousi led a cell that attempted to carry out a massive explosive and chemical attack on the US Embassy, the headquarters of the Jordanian General Intelligence Directorate, office of the prime minister and other targets in Amman in mid-April 2004. Jordanian officials said they had halted an attack using three trucks loaded with 20
tons of explosives and chemicals. The three trucks were halted in Irbid, and Jordanian sources reported that they could have killed 80,000 people and wounded 160,000 others within a two square kilometer area. The cell was one of two cells in place, and its members had a variety of forged Jordanian, Syrian and other Arab passports.

Zarqawi acknowledged the attempt in an audiotape circulated on April 30, 2004, but denied any effort to use chemical weapons. The tape made available on an Islamist website said his goal was to "totally destroy the building of the Jordanian intelligence services" with "raw materials which are sold on the market...The Jordanian security services have lied in claiming to have foiled a plan to kill innocent Muslims." He accused Jordan of "creating an outcry and presenting the Jordanian people as a victim targeted at the hands of terrorism ... in order to hide the sordid face of the Jordanian intelligence services..." and of the "evil Jordanian services" of "fabricating (the affair) of the chemical bomb." Zarqawi went on to say "If we had such a bomb -- and we ask God that we have such a bomb soon -- we would not hesitate for a moment to strike Israeli towns, such as Eilat, Tel Aviv and others...We have scores to settle with this [Jordanian] government which will turn children's hair white."

Some sources say Zarqawi halted further attack attempts after that time. One senior Jordanian source said that Jordan had foiled two attacks in 2003, eight in 2004, and 10 in 2005. Zarqawi was the first major insurgent leader to openly threaten to expand the fighting to foreign countries, however, although his open statements only began to get serious publicity in the summer of 2005. Jordanian intelligence reported that it had intercepted signals that Zarqawi had ordered some of his fighters to leave Iraq to carry out attacks in other Arab and Islamic countries in October 2005.

On November 9, 2005, Zarqawi’s organization struck three US owned hotels in Amman. Neither the attack nor the targets should have come as a surprise to Jordanian officials however. Zarqawi had previously attempted to blow up western hotels in Amman--including the Radisson SAS--as part of millennium celebrations in late 1999. That attack, however, was thwarted by Jordanian intelligence and Zarqawi later fled to Afghanistan.

The November 9 bombings at the Radisson SAS, Grand Hyatt, and Days Inn hotels killed at least 60 people and wounded more than a hundred others. The bombers—all Iraqis—deliberately targeted Jordanians—including a Jordanian-Palestinian wedding party. Four Palestinian officials, including Lt. General Bashir Nafe, the head of West Bank security, as well as other foreigners, were also among the casualties.

The first bombing occurred shortly before 9 p.m. inside the Philadelphia ballroom of the Radisson hotel. Right before detonating his 22-pound explosive packed belt, the bomber and the apparent leader of the cell, Ali Hussein Ali al-Shamari, jumped onto a table. The explosion brought parts of the ceiling down onto the more than 300 wedding guests assembled in the ballroom and sprayed ball bearings contained inside the vest across the room.

Moments after the first bombing, 23 year-old Rawad Jassem Mohammed detonated his bomb in the coffee shop of the Grand Hyatt. Seconds later, the third bomber, Safaa Mohammed Ali, also 23, detonated his explosives outside the Days Inn hotel. Jordanian officials believe that, like Mohammed, Ali planned to detonate the bomb inside the coffee shop. But after a suspicious
waiter called security, Ali fled. Once outside the hotel, he knelt on the ground and detonated his explosives, killing three members of a nearby Chinese military delegation.1377

Immediately following the attack, rumors began circulating that there had been a fourth bomber and that a husband and wife had carried out one of the attacks. On November 13, the alleged fourth bomber and wife of the ringleader Sajida Mubarak al-Rishawi appeared in a video confession on Jordanian television. Rishawi said her husband had pushed her out of the Radisson ballroom after her own bomb failed to detonate and that she had then fled the scene in a taxi. Her whereabouts for the three days between the attacks and her capture by Jordanian police have not yet been confirmed. Jordanian officials say she went to her sister’s husband’s family in the nearby city of Salt, but witnesses claim to have seen her in the Tlaa’ Ali neighborhood of Amman where one of the cell’s safe houses was located.1378

From Rishawi’s televised statement, we know that much of the attack was assembled outside of Jordan. Shamari and his wife, both natives of Anbar province, left Iraq on November 5. The couple were picked up by two men in a white car and driven across the border, apparently using fake passports under the name of Ali Hussein Ali and Sajida Abdel Kader Latef to enter Jordan. The explosive belts used in the bombings appear to have entered the country with them.

Two days later, on November 7, the group rented an apartment in the Tlaa’ Ali neighborhood of Amman. The apartment, located in an area with a large Iraqi community, was one of at least two safe houses the cell used before the attack. On the evening of the 9 the bombers took taxis to their targets, which according to Rishawi, had been selected in advance.

There were clear links between Zarqawi’s group and the attack in Jordan. At least two of the bombers--Ali Hussein Ali Shamari and his wife--seem to have been part of Zarqawi’s operation in Fallujah. Three of Rishawi’s brothers were killed by US forces in Iraq.1379 One, Samir Mubarak Atrous al-Rishawi was Zarqawi’s top lieutenant in Anbar province and was killed by a US strike on his pickup truck during operations in Fallujah in 2004. According to the US military, another bomber, Safaa Mohammed Ali, may have been in their custody briefly in 2004. The US military said it detained an Iraqi with the same name as Ali in November 2004 but released him after two weeks because they lacked grounds to hold him. As of this writing, US officials are unsure if the Ali they had in their custody was the same one who struck the Days Inn hotel on November 9.

Although all four bombers were Iraqi nationals, it is possible that Zarqawi drew on his own connections in Jordan to carry out the November 9 attacks. There are some 400,000 Iraqis living in Jordan, some of whom have ties to Salafi jihadists in Iraq and might be willing to help carry out operations in Jordan.

Jordanian officials, including King Abdullah II, have refused to rule out the possibility that Jordanians may have been involved in the attacks. In the days following the bombings, Jordanian security officials arrested 12 suspects, mostly Jordanians and Iraqis. Perhaps the strongest evidence of a Jordanian connection comes from the city of Salt, 17 miles northeast of Amman. As already mentioned, many reports say Rishawi fled to the home of her brother-in-law’s family there after the bombings.

Sometime in 2002 or 2003, Rishawi’s sister Fatima married Nidal Arabiyat, a 30-year-old unemployed Jordanian from Salt who had joined the Salafi jihadi network several years earlier. Arabiyat had joined Raed Khreisat, a religious leader, in the late 1990s and gone to train with the
Kurdish Islamic group, Ansar al-Islam in northern Iraq. After American forces invaded Iraq in 2003, Arabiyat joined forces with Zarqawi.

When Arabiyat was killed fighting US forces in Iraq, it was Rishawi’s husband, Shamari, who called Arabiyat’s family in Salt to tell them he had become a martyr.\textsuperscript{1380} The Rishawi-Arabiyat link, although fascinating is hardly unusual. Strong tribal and family ties exist between Jordanians and Iraqis. Locals say at least 30 men from Salt have died in Iraq fighting the Americans.\textsuperscript{1381} Many are connected by more than family ties or loyalty to their clan; they are motivated by a shared belief in Salafi Jihadism.

The Jordanian reaction to the November 9 bombings was notably different from past reactions to Zarqawi attacks. In the days following the triple bombing, tens of thousands of Jordanians marched against Zarqawi and pledged their allegiance to King Abdullah. Jordanians seem to have been shocked by the knowledge that Zarqawi, a fellow Jordanian, deliberately sought out Jordanian targets and Jordanian victims. Even Zarqawi’s own Khalayleh clan joined the public backlash, taking out ads in the country’s leading newspapers denouncing their infamous relative and pledging to remove any tribal protection he may have been benefiting from.\textsuperscript{1382}

For his part, Zarqawi responded to the public backlash by releasing an audiotape on November 18. Earlier statements from Al Qa’ida in Mesopotamia had alerted Jordanian officials to the fact that there might have been a fourth bomber, as well as a husband and wife team, involved in the attack. Zarqawi’s 26-minute statement began:\textsuperscript{1383}

> All the world has heard the noise made by the Jordanian Government that the Jordanians are the victims of terrorism and that those terrorists like to shed blood, all this came after three lions have left their lair in Baghdad making their way to the center of Amman to target three hideouts of the crusaders and the Jews.

The Qa’ida has made the blessed step for the coming reasons:

1. The Jordanian government has announced its infidelity and clearly battled against God.

2. The Jordanian army has become the guard of the borders of the Israeli borders, they have banned the Mujahedeen from breaking into the depth of the blessed lands to fight the (brothers of the monkeys and the pigs). How many of the Mujahedeen [have been] killed by a bullet in the back from the Jordanian soldiers securing the borders?

3. The Jordanian government has spread vice and corruption. The state has become like a swamp of pornography-the hotels and the refreshment resorts are widely spread on Aqaba and the Dead Sea—we feel pity [for] the harm caused by this corrupted family of both its men and women.

4. This state has permitted the Zionist enemy to infiltrate in the Jordanian society socially, economically, and politically. The best ever example given is the Hassan industrial city, where all the capitals are in the hands of the Jews.

5. The American’s secret prisons in Jordan, working under the supervision of the American intelligence itself, said that there are tens of Mujahedeen in them, going under all different colors of torture done [at] the hands of the Jordanian intelligence members. The Los Angeles Times newspaper has mentioned earlier that the best ally for the CIA in the region now is the Jordanian intelligence, and that part of the CIA budget goes to train the members of the Jordanian intelligence members in Amman.

6. Concerning Iraq, Jordan has become the rear base for the Americans in their war against the Islamic nation, the American airplanes flies from the Jordanian lands to attack the Mujahedeen, and lest we forget the army of translators (the Infidels). The fleet of vehicles that supplies the American army with food supplies were all driven by the Jordanians.
A message to the Moslem people in Jordan, we assure you that we are the earnest ones about your safety, we know that you were the prey of the criminal regime, they have lied when they say that you become the victims of the Mujahedeen, it is a lie.

Zarqawi continued:

We have targeted these hotels after two months of surveillance and basing on information collected from inside and outside the hotels from our trusty sources.

The Radisson Hotel was the gathering point of the Israeli tourists and intelligence members, also the Day’s Inn hotel. It is also the residence of all the Israeli embassy employees.

The Hayat Amman [sic. Grand Hyatt] is the centre of the American, Israeli and the Iraqi intelligence. The Israeli spy Azzam Azzam was meeting the Mossad members in the Hayat Amman hotel… it is a lie that the martyr has blown up himself in the middle of the wedding crowds…

The government that was able all these years to double cross people that they are enemies of the Zionists can convert the truth easily, we ask God’s mercy for all Moslems killed in this operation, as they were not the target, the martyrs have targeted the hall that had the meeting of the intelligence officers, the killing was due to collapsing of the secondary ceiling, it was not done with intention.

…the brother of the groom has said according to the Quds press, it was unlikely that the blast was due to a suicide attack, as there were no signs of something wrong going on.

He also added that the ceiling has fallen with all components, cement, iron bars and the decoration, on the heads of the wedding attendees, the dust has covered all over the place … he think[s] the cause was a bomb planted in the ceiling as there was no fire.

The two other hotels were embracing [a] number of American and Jewish figures. The brothers have succeeded in knowing the place and time of their meeting, after frequent surveillance for the place, so the brothers knew for sure their targets.

Zarqawi justified the attack by claiming that Israeli and American secret agents had been meeting at the three hotels. Zarqawi also repeatedly asserted that Jordanians had not been the targets. Near the end of his statement, he threatened King Abdullah, stating: “Your star is fading. You will not escape your fate, you descendant of traitors. We will be able to reach your head and chop it off…”

Some experts believe the November 9 triple bombings in Amman may have been the first example of Zarqawi coming through on his pledge to spread jihad outside Iraq. In an interview with ABC News in mid-November, Iraq’s Interior Minister Bayan Jabr said he believed Zarqawi might be planning more out-of-area operations. Jabr said his ministry had uncovered information that Al Qa’ida in Mesopotamia was planning at least two other attacks—one in Yemen and the other in Egypt-against foreigners and Americans.

Jabr also said that foreigners had been recruited to come to Iraq in order to receive training so that they could return to their home countries to carry out attacks. As proof, he offered several passports the ministry had seized in recent months. Among the nationalities represented were the countries most often associated with foreign fighters in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Algeria. But also seized were passports from France, South Africa, Azerbaijan, India and Pakistan.

After Zarqawi’s death, Jordanian intelligence officials stated that he had recruited as many as 300 individuals to carry out terrorist attacks outside of Iraq. Reportedly, these recruits were trained in Iraq and then deployed to their countries of origin and told to wait for instructions as to when and where to carry out attacks.
While Sand European officials acknowledged that this “bleed out” of terrorists was occurring at least on some level, they put their numbers at much less than 300. The numbers of those who have been identified or caught leaving Europe to wage jihad in Iraq numbered only in the dozens.\textsuperscript{1387}

Some of the plots that were uncovered did have individuals with ties to the Zarqawi network. In Germany, 18 suspected members of Ansar al-Islam and Zarqawi’s organization had been arrested. This included three Iraqis who were accused with attempting to assassinate Ayad Allawi during his visit to Germany. Counter-terrorism officials in France found connections between al-Zarqawi and a Chechen-trained group in Paris discovered in late 2002.\textsuperscript{1388} Neither Zarqawi nor Al Qa’ida in Iraq, however, carried out large-scale operations in Europe or countries other than Jordan.

**Zarqawi and Syria**

Experts differ in opinion as to how much of Zarqawi’s recruiting and training have taken place in Syria and with Syrian backing. There are reports that Zarqawi and top lieutenants met in Syria in the spring of 2005, but these have not been formally confirmed by US officials. In fact, US intelligence assessments expressed doubt in June 2005 that Zarqawi had crossed into Syria earlier in the year, stating that such an event was inconsistent with Syria’s, and Zarqawi’s, pattern of behavior. US, British, and Iraqi experts do believe, however, that a substantial number of recruits pass through Syria, and with Syrian tolerance or deliberate indifference – if not active support.\textsuperscript{1389}

**Zarqawi and “Weapons of Mass Media”**

The various Islamist extremist groups have been highly effective at striking at targets in ways that achieve high media and political impact, particularly in the form of suicide bombings and beheadings.\textsuperscript{1390} These attacks have been “weapons of mass media” when they have struck against Coalition targets, and this has led some to see such militant groups as successful manipulators of Arab and Western media outlets, able to tailor their attacks for maximum media coverage and psychological effect. As work by the Crisis Group has shown, they have also made effective use of the Internet, showing a steadily increasing sophistication in using it as a method of communicating and seeking Iraqi and outside support.\textsuperscript{1391}

At the same time, Zarqawi’s extremism sometimes backfired in terms of media coverage when directed against fellow Muslims, just as it did in declaring war on Shi’ites. In the summer of 2005, for example, Zarqawi’s group attacked several Muslim diplomats in an effort to stymie relations between the new Iraqi government and foreign governments. Egypt’s Ihab Sherif, tapped to become the first Arab ambassador to Iraq, was kidnapped and then killed by the Jordanian terrorist’s Al Qa’ida movement.

An Internet statement released by the group suggested that he might have been beheaded and stated that he had been killed for Egypt’s recognition of the Iraqi government, for the country’s fostering of disbelief in Islam, for ‘waging war against Muslims’ by cracking down on Islamist groups like the Muslim Brotherhood, and by sending an ambassador to Iraq at US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s bidding.\textsuperscript{1392}

Soon afterwards, Zarqawi’s group targeted Pakistani Ambassador Mohammed Younis Khan and Bahraini charges d’affaires Hassan Malallah Ansari. In separate attacks, both Khan’s and
Ansari’s convoys were hit with gunfire in what were described as attempted kidnappings. Ansari suffered a minor gunshot wound and Pakistan quickly relocated Khan to Jordan. Not long after, two of Algeria’s diplomats to the new Iraqi government was kidnapped in Baghdad and later killed.

The resulting coverage in Iraqi and Arab media was anything but favorable, and may help explain why jihadist websites often list complaints detailing a lack of press coverage for some of their attacks, and about media criticism.  

Zarqawi’s Al Qa’ida in Iraq group severely criticized the Al Jazeera satellite television station in June 2005 for what it called impartial reporting. It said that Al Jazeera, long criticized by US officials, had “sided” with the US over Iraq. Similarly, in January of 2006, Zarqawi posted an audio clip on an Islamist website denouncing those countries that had met at an Arab League summit in November to address Iraqi political reconciliation as “agents” of the Sand guilty of “destroying Iraq.”

Zarqawi also had to issue “retractions” or “clarifications” after unpopular attacks or statements. After his declaration of “total war” on Shi’ites (see above) received a very cool response from the larger jihadist community, Zarqawi issued a partial retraction. Many Sunnis rejected Zarqawi’s declaration and Al Qa’ida’s Zawahiri warned attacks on Shi’ites would hurt the group’s level of popular support. Zarqawi responded in a similar way after the November 9 bombings in Amman (see above). The backlash to this declaration from the Muslim world, especially within Jordan itself, was enough to prompt Zarqawi to issue several statements denying Jordanians had been the targets of the attacks. Instead, Zarqawi said Israeli and American intelligence officials meeting in the hotels were the real targets. Such statements and retractions suggest Zarqawi may have been on the defensive and that his group is growing increasingly vulnerable to Muslim public opinion. Such developments may have helped lead Zarqawi’s Al Qa’ida in Mesopotamia group to start an online Internet magazine entitled Zurwat al Sanam, in an effort to wage a more effective propaganda and recruiting campaign. Other insurgent groups on the Web have mirrored this effort, and some analysts believe that it is a defensive tactic to counter the perceived inroads made by the January 30th elections and the capture of important terrorist lieutenants in the months that followed.

**The Hunt for Al Qa’ida and Zarqawi**

While US claims about the importance of the killings and captures of senior Al Qa’ida leaders have sometimes been exaggerated – as have claims to have nearly killed or captured Zarqawi – there have been many real successes. The Coalition and Iraqi forces captured or killed at least 12 significant Al Qa’ida leaders in the two months before Zarqawi’s death, and this was only part of a steadily improving series of attacks on Al Qa’ida that began in 2005.

**Hunting Al Qa’ida in 2005**

On January 10, 2005, then Prime Minister Allawi announced that Izz al-Din Al-Majid, a chief Zarqawi financier, was arrested in Fallujah in early December 2004. Al Majid had more than $35 million in his bank accounts and controlled $2 to $7 billion of former regime assets stolen.
from Iraqi government accounts. His objective, according to interrogators, was to unite the insurgent groups Ansar al-Sunna, Jaysh Muhammad, and the Islamic Resistance Army. Since that time, the appendix to this report shows that MNF forces have killed or captured many other such senior cadres.

In July 2005, US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard Myers announced that the Coalition had captured a long sought after battlefield commander, Abu ‘Abd-al-Aziz. According to the US military, al-Aziz had led a foreign fighter cell in Fallujah up until the US took control of the city. Fleeing the city, al-Aziz apparently came to Baghdad and earned the moniker ‘the Amir of Baghdad’ among fellow insurgents.1396

Later that month, the US military announced the capture of what was described as an Al Qa‘ida commander and close confidant to Zarqawi. Khamis Farhan Khalaf Abd al-Fahdawi, or Abu Seba, was captured with approximately 30 other terrorist suspects. It is believed that Seba played a role in the murder of Egypt’s ambassador and in the attacks on the Pakistani and Bahraini envoys. An Internet posting purportedly written by Zarqawi’s group said that Seba was a low-level leader of a cell in Baghdad and that the US forces were inventing ranks to portray an image of success in taking down the terrorist networks.1397

Not long after, an Egyptian insurgent named Hamdi Tantawi was captured by Iraqi police in the town of Yusufiya, along with weaponry, computers, and money. It is believed that Tantawi financed insurgent operations and allegedly was a lieutenant to Ayman al-Zawahiri, the second most recognized international Al Qa‘ida figure behind Osama bin Laden.

Further details were unavailable, and it is unclear whether Tantawi was operating independently or coordinating with Zawahiri and/or Zarqawi. If he were as close to Zawahiri as suggested by the press reports, it would suggest that the coordination between the old guard Al Qa‘ida leadership and the Al Qa‘ida in Iraq group is far closer than previously thought. It would also suggest that Bin Laden and Zawahiri are perhaps not as hard pressed and on the run along the Afghan border with Pakistan as has largely been assumed.

US military spokesman General Kevin Bergner told reporters on September 16 that joint operations between Iraqi and US forces in northern Iraq had captured or killed 80 senior leaders since January 2005.1398

In late September 2005, the US military announced it had killed two senior members of Zarqawi’s group. Abu Nasir, believed to be Al Qa‘ida in Iraq’s leader in Karabilah, was killed near the border with Syria on September 27. Two days earlier, US forces in Baghdad shot and killed Abdullah Najim Abdullah Mohamed al-Jawari, also known as Abu Azzam. Thought to be Al Qa‘ida in Iraq’s No. 2 man, Abu Azzam was the leader of the insurgency in Iraq’s Anbar Province. Recent improvements in US human intelligence, improved technical intelligence, targeting of insurgents, and more developed informants, are believed to have contributed to the success of the two operations.1399

Around the same time, soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry from the 172nd Stryker Brigade, known as “2-1,” captured more than 180 suspected terrorists. In late October, the 2-1 killed a terrorist cell leader and his assistant, crippling an al Qa‘ida terrorist cell in Mosul. The terrorists, identified as Nashwan Mijhim Muslet and Nahi Achmed Obeid Sultan, were killed during a raid on their safe house on October 22. Muslet and Sultan were behind at least three videotaped
beheadings and had terrorized Mosul residents through roadblocks, extortion and kidnappings.\textsuperscript{1400}

In early November, the US military announced it had killed two regional terrorists in an operation in the town of Husaybah, on the Syrian border. According to a US military press release, the two men, identified as Asadallah and Abu Zahra, were “key al Qa’ida in Iraq terrorist leaders.” The statement described the two men in the following way:\textsuperscript{1401}

Asadallah was a senior al Qa’ida in Iraq terrorist leader and foreign fighter facilitator in the Husaybah area. Asadallah commanded several terrorist and foreign fighter cells in the Husaybah, and al Waim region. Asadallah also coordinated the funneling and distribution of foreign fighters from Syria into the Husaybah area as well as their employment as suicide bombers. His foreign fighters were responsible for numerous suicide bombings in the region. He also directed, planned and executed many of the terrorist attacks on Iraqi security and coalition forces.

Abu Zahra, a close associated of the current al Qa’ida in Iraq Emir of Husaybah. As a close personal friend and confident to the Emir of Husaybah he acted as an assistant, helping run the day to day activities of the terrorist organization. Zahra took an active role in planning and coordinating attacks against Iraqi security and Coalition forces. He additionally was reported to provide logistical support for various terrorist cells in the area. This support included providing weapons and ammunition, arranging housing, and money for foreign fighters and terrorists operating in the area.

Also in November, US officials reported that they had come close to capturing Zarqawi on at least three occasions. The military said it was using eavesdropping satellites, unmanned drones and U-2 spy planes to gather intelligence on the insurgency and to track Zarqawi’s movements. US forces were also helping Iraqis in the intelligence process.\textsuperscript{1402}

US officials believed they had been close to catching Zarqawi on several occasions. In the past, US forces have stormed restaurants and hospitals after receiving reports about Zarqawi sightings. The US military believes it came closest to capturing Zarqawi in February 2005, when the insurgent leader jumped out of a truck as it approached a US checkpoint outside Ramadi. Zarqawi’s driver and bodyguard were captured, and a large amount of cash along with Zarqawi’s laptop computer was seized.

There may have been other near misses. According to a senior US intelligence official: “Several times we have showed up at places where we know he was hours or days earlier. But the intelligence we get is never fresh enough.” US officials believe Zarqawi had slipped in and out of Iraq during the past few years, traveling to Jordan, Syria and Iran to raise funds and recruits for the insurgency.\textsuperscript{1403}

US assertions that it was getting closer to Zarqawi intensified in the fall of 2005. In late November, US Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad told CNN, “His [Zarqawi’s] days are numbered, he is going to be ultimately found…Either he will be brought to justice or he will die in the battle to capture him, but we are getting closer to that goal every day. A lot of coalition forces and experts are working hard on this…it’s not a question of whether but when.”\textsuperscript{1404}

On November 19, US and Iraqi forces surrounded a two-story house in the mostly Kurdish area of eastern Mosul, after receiving intelligence that Zarqawi might be hiding there. Coalition troops encountered fierce resistance by the insurgents, heightening suspicion that a high-value target like Zarqawi was inside the house. Three of the eight insurgents killed during the three-hour raid blew themselves up rather than be captured alive. Immediately following the raid, US forces sealed the house.
Speculation that Zarqawi might have been killed in the raid grew after Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari told the Jordanian Petra news agency that DNA tests were being carried out on the bodies. But the governor of Nineveh province, Duraid Kashmoula, told the Washington Post on November 21 that there was only a 30 percent chance that one of the bodies was that of Zarqawi, adding, “We’ve had dry holes before.”

US officials, however, remained cautious. On November 22, a top US commander in Iraq said there was “absolutely no reason” to believe Zarqawi had died in the raid and Ambassador Khalilzad echoed that assessment, saying, “I do not believe that we got him. But his days are numbered…we’re closer to the goal, but unfortunately we didn’t get him in Mosul.” The following day, Al Qa’ida in Mesopotamia issued a statement on an Islamic web site denying their leader had been killed. The statement said the group had waited to respond to the rumors of Zarqawi’s death “until this lie took its full length to let Muslims know the extent of [the media’s] stupidity and shallow thinking.”

In late November 2005, US officials believed the best intelligence showed Zarqawi was operating in western Baghdad. But Iraq’s Interior Minister Bayan Jabr told ABC News in mid-November that the Iraqi government had evidence that Zarqawi had been injured in Ramadi sometime in October or early November. US officials also reported that more and more Iraqis were coming forward with tips on his whereabouts following the November 9 bombings in Amman. But while the military’s elite Task Force 145 continued the more than two year old hunt of the elusive leader of the insurgency, the public disowning of Zarqawi by his own tribe after the November 9 bombings may have done more to hasten his downfall.

**Hunting Al Qa’ida in 2006**

In spite of Coalition and Iraqi successes, Al-Qa’ida and other extremist organizations still had the capability to target Shi’ite Iraqis in an effort to heighten civil conflict in early in early 2006. Accordingly to some uncertain reports, al-Qa’ida was also still capable of capable of organizing large-scale assaults against strongly defended coalition positions.

In March 2006, the Ministry of Interior reported a plot was uncovered that involved an attempt by 421 al-Qa’ida members to stage an attack on the Green Zone. These recruits were, according to Interior Minister Bayan Jabr, a “bureaucrat’s signature away” from acceptance into the Army battalions charged with guarding the gates to the Green Zone. After gaining access to the area, the fighters planned on storming US and British embassies, taking those inside hostage. Several Defense Ministry officials were implicated as “insiders” in the plot and subsequently jailed. It is important to note, however, that Coalition sources never confirmed the existence of such a plot.

In March of 2006, wanted terrorist Rafid Ibrahim Fattah (aka Abu Umar al Kurdi) was killed in an early morning raid. Abu Umar had ties to Jaysh al Islami, Ansar al Sunnah, Taliban-members in Afghanistan, extremists in Pakistani, as well as senior al-Qa’ida leaders including bin Laden and al-Zawahiri.

Throughout April and May, a series of Coalition operations and raids against al-Qa’ida forces killed and captured most key individuals and resulted in the seizure of numerous weapons caches. It was also speculated, after the death of Zarqawi, that this up tick in successful raids and capture of al-Qa’ida members contributed to the intelligence that lead to identifying his
whereabouts and eventual demise. Between missions on April 16 and June 2, Task Force 145 killed or captured more than 100 members of al-Qa'ida.

Several of these successes were chronicled as follows by Sean D. Taylor in Defense News:

- April 28, 2006: The “Emir of Samarra,” Hamadi Tahki was killed in Samarra.
- May 2, 2006: Ten terrorists were killed, three wearing suicide vests. One was wounded at a safe house 25 miles southwest of Balad.
- May 5, 2006: Five suspects were detained and an unknown amount of terrorists killed near Samarra.
- May 13, 2006: Three terrorists were killed, and four were destroyed in a search for an al-Qa'ida leader near Julaybah. Hideouts and weapons caches were discovered as well.
- May 13-14, 2006: Abu Mustafa was and 15 others were killed in a raid in Latifiyah. Eight others were detained.
- May 14, 2006: A raid on a suspected terrorist hideout in Yusifiyah killed more than 25. Eight were detained and three safe houses were identified and destroyed.
- May 17, 2006: Abu Ahad and another al-Qa'ida member were killed in a Baghdad raid.
- May 23, 2006: Ten suspected terrorists were captured in Lake Tharthar.
- May 26, 2006: In Anbar, six suspected al-Qa'ida members were captured and weapons and ammunition caches discovered.
- May 28, 2006: In a Ramadi raid, seven suspects were detained and bomb-making materials were discovered.
- May 29, 2006: Insurgent leader Ahmed al-Dabash was captured in the Mansour district of Baghdad.
- June 2, 2006: Hasayn Ali Muazabir, a wanted al-Qa'ida terrorist, was killed near Balad.

**Zarqawi’s Death: Temporary “Victory” or Lasting Impact?**

These attacks went on to kill Zarqawi, although the full details are unclear and some critical aspects have almost certainly been concealed for security purposes or to confuse Al Qa'ida and other insurgent organizations.

Official sources have stated that Coalition forces had been tracking key Zarqawi lieutenants for several weeks, Jordanian intelligence provided important information, and sources inside Al Qa'ida provided additional information for a reward. US military officials stated that the operation was the product of weeks of extensive intelligence gathering. Reportedly, one of the sources was a member of al-Qa'ida in Iraq.

Prime Minister Al-Maliki said that tips from local residents contributed to the intelligence as well. A Jordanian official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, told an Associated Press reporter that some of the information that led the US to Baquba had come from Jordan’s sources in Iraq. Iraq’s Foreign Minister, Hoshyar Zebari indicated that efforts to find Zarqawi were stepped up after he released a videotape in April and implied that locations in the video had been “pinpointed” by intelligence analysts.

US officials later stated that they had been tracking Abdel al-Rahman with UAVs for weeks beforehand. Anonymous sources within the US government also acknowledged that the critical piece of information that led to Zarqawi’s whereabouts came from an informant within al-Qa'ida.
in Iraq. This official spoke in unqualified terms saying, “We have a guy on the inside who led us directly to Zarqawi.” Iraq’s National Security Advisor, Mouwafak al-Rubaie made a similar but bolder declaration saying, “We have managed to infiltrate al-Qa’ida in Iraq.” At the same time however, this leak could have been a scare tactic designed to cause panic and suspicion within al-Qa’ida’s ranks.

**Killing Zarqawi**

On Wednesday, June 7, 2006, these efforts enabled US commandos from Task Force 145, one of the units charged with capturing Zarqawi, to surround the house when the ground commander called in the air strike. The call went to two F-16s on a routine patrol, one of which was in the process of aerial refuelling, resulting in the lone fighter aircraft flying the mission and dropping both bombs.

The F-16 dropped two 500-pound bombs on a suspected al-Zarqawi hideout in Hibhib, near Baquba. Iraqi police were the first to arrive on the scene and pulled a man resembling al-Zarqawi from the wreckage; US troops arriving shortly thereafter. US officials said that Zarqawi was identified by his fingerprints, tattoos and scars, and later by DNA. Zarqawi survived but died shortly after being put on a stretcher. In all, seven people were killed, including Zarqawi’s spiritual advisor, Sheik Abdel Rahman, whom it was believed that Zarqawi was visiting.

A flood of contradictory reporting has added uncertain details and conjecture. Perhaps the only important question raised, beyond issues involving sensitive data, was why an air strike was conducted if US special forces had the house surrounded and could possibly capture Zarqawi whose interrogation could have elicited valuable information. Gen. Caldwell and later Secretary Rumsfeld stated that the compound was likely highly fortified and did not want to put American lives at risk. In addition, Zarqawi had proven adept at escaping US forces before, thus the use of air power would provide a greater assurance of a successful strike.

**Ongoing Attacks and Their Impact**

In any case, Zarqawi’s death did not mark even the most temporary end to Coalition and Iraqi strikes on Al Qa’ida. Some 17 raids were conducted the same day of the strike and 39 the following day based off of intelligence found at the site of target. These searches found weapons, ammunition, “suicide” belts, passports and Iraqi army uniforms. They also resulted in the detention of 25 suspects and the seizure of documents, cell phones, and computers. There were reports that as many as five civilians were killed during these subsequent operations. In the process, however, Coalition forces found what Maj. Gen. William B. Caldwell IV described as a “treasure trove” of information. Mowafak al-Rubaie, Iraq’s national security advisor, said, “We believe this is the beginning of the end of Al-Qa’ida in Iraq...We feel we know their locations, the names of their leaders, their whereabouts, their movements, through the documents we found during the last few days.”

In the week following al-Zarqawi’s death, General Caldwell announced that more than 450 raids on suspected militant hideouts—a third of which were carried out by Iraqi forces—have led to the capture of 759 “anti-Iraq elements,” the killing of 104 insurgents, and the discovery of 28 significant arms caches. When one of the “top five” leaders of al-Qa’ida in Iraq, Mansur al-Mashhadani, was killed in a coalition air strike in Yusufiya on June 15, Caldwell commented that it would hinder the organization’s ability to regenerate and reorganize itself.
U.S., Iraqi officials, and analysts seemed to agree that the death of al-Zarqawi was at least a temporary “victory” for the Coalition and Iraq. President Bush called Zarqawi’s death, “a severe blow to al-Qa'ida” and a “significant victory in the war on terror.” He warned however, that violence would continue in Iraq saying, “We have tough days ahead of us in Iraq that will require the continuing patience of the American people.”  

According to the numbers released by the central morgue, however, the death toll escalated after the death of al-Zarqawi. On July 4, the central morgue announced that it received 1,595 bodies in June, which represents a 16 percent rise since May. Zalmay M. Khalilzad, American ambassador in Iraq, told the BBC the same day that “in terms of the level of violence, [the death of al-Zarqawi] has not had any impact at this point.” According to information provided by the morgue deputy, the death toll for June 2006 was roughly double the 879 bodies received in June 2005.

Still, there was no doubt that the Iraqi government and US forces in Iraq scored a major political and propaganda victory by killing Abu Musab al Zarqawi. It was less clear that this victory would have a major impact over time. Its lasting importance depended on two things: The overall resilience of the insurgency in Iraq and how well the new Iraqi government could follow up with actions that a build a national consensus and defeat and undermine all the elements of the insurgency.

Some analysts said that the end of al-Zarqawi presented the al-Qa'ida leadership with a strategic opportunity to reassert control over the global jihadist movement. Although Zarqawi allowed Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri to continue the fight against the west from their ensconced location, there was evidence that Zarqawi’s brutal attacks on Shi’ite civilians had alienated more Muslims than it had attracted. This, and his general stubbornness and independence, was said to be a source of contention between top al-Qa'ida leaders and the “Butcher of Baghdad.”

As Paul Wilkinson of University of St. Andrews in Scotland put it, “A number of al-Qa'ida figures were uncomfortable with the tactics he was using in Iraq...It was quite clear with Zarqawi that as far as the al-Qa'ida core leadership goes, they couldn’t control the way in which their network affiliates operated.”

The costs of failing to reassert this strategic control over al-Qa'ida in Iraq, these analysts pointed out, could significantly reduce al-Qa'ida’s relevance to the jihadist struggle. Yet most seemed to feel that al-Qa'ida would not allow this to occur. “Al-Qa'ida headquarters will now have more influence on the Iraqi branch. At least, I think they’ll be in a far better position than before,” said Mustafa Alani, a terrorism analyst at the Gulf Research Center in Dubai.

Despite brief self-congratulations, virtually no political leaders or analysts hailed this as the end of the insurgency or the Islamist extremist presence in Iraq. Although it was unclear as to who would fill Zarqawi’s void, there were a number of speculations and likely candidates.

**An Uncertain Successor with Uncertain Competence**

Almost immediately, the Mujahedeen Shura Council, the Zarqawi-created umbrella organization for Iraq’s Islamist insurgent groups, posted an Internet statement that claimed several attacks on US troops and Iraqi forces. Although those attacks were not verified, it was an illustration that
such groups were anxious to prove their continued relevance. Alternatively, another statement said that “big operations” were being planned that would “shake the enemy.”

Abdullah Rashid al-Baghdadi, who had previously succeeded Zarqawi as the head of the Mujahedeen Shura Council, posted a statement that called on Muslims to continue the fight and seemed to call for new recruits. “Iraq is the front line of defense for Islam and Muslims. So, don’t miss this opportunity to join the Mujahedeen and the martyrs,” said an al-Baghdadi statement. Another statement by Hamil al-Rashash was more panicked, “Where is your money? Where is your money? And where are your men?”

The al-Qa’ida website also attempted to portray Zarqawi as a martyr and included wording that hinted at the possibility that his short-lived survival after the massive US strike was due to some mystical qualities about him. “This is a martyr’s miracle. Tons of bombs…and the face of the lion is still there,” said one posting.

In an effort to reassert their viciousness and strength after Zarqawi’s death, Ansar al-Sunna, a group of mostly Iraqi Islamists but closely associated with al-Qa’ida, posted a video showing the beheading of three members of Iraq’s police forces. On the video, the men admitted to being members of the “Wolf Brigade” which had recently been singled out by Iraqi politicians for committing atrocities against Sunni civilians. The video claimed that the three men had kidnapped a group of Sunnis at a checkpoint and subsequently beheaded them. The end of the video warned all of those who would join Iraq’s security forces that, “You will live in terror until we eliminate you and your fate will be in hell.” Although once popular with Islamist insurgents, taped beheadings had since declined and become relatively rare.

Gen. Caldwell suggested that Abu Ayyub al-Masri, an Egyptian, could be a likely successor to Zarqawi. Al-Masri had trained with Zarqawi in Afghanistan and was believed to have created the first al-Qa’ida cell in Iraqi in 2002. Gen. Caldwell also indicated that al-Masri had a close relationship with al-Qa’ida’s “number two” man, al-Zawahiri, also Egyptian.

Shortly after Zarqawi’s death, Al-Qa’ida in Iraq declared via an Internet statement that Abu Hamza al-Muhajer would become the organization’s new leader. This individual, unknown to US intelligence, had not appeared in any previous al-Qa’ida documents or statements. Al-Muhajer, the new leader’s nom de guerre, is Arabic for “immigrant.” Analysts speculated that this could indicate that he was a foreigner, and could mean that al-Qa’ida in Iraq would continue its tactics of mass-casualty suicide bombings against civilians, initiated under Zarqawi. It also seemed to imply a new emphasis on secrecy. Later reporting claimed that this was simply a new pseudonym for al-Masri, who had become an important Al Qa’ida leader in southern Iraq.

However, there was no firm consensus among intelligence analysts and US officials as to exactly what was happening. Speaking anonymously, an official noted that the name could just as easily be a new name for a previously known individual. The name “Muhajer,” often used by Egyptians, meant that it could not be ruled out that this was a new title for al-Masri, who was deemed a likely successor to al-Zarqawi.

On June 15, the US military officially reported that Abu Ayyub al-Masri was the same person that Al-Qa’ida remarked in the web posting would be the successor to al-Zarqawi. Reporting on this development, Caldwell said, “Al-Masri’s intimate knowledge of al-Qa’ida in Iraq and his close relationship with [al-Zarqawi’s] operations will undoubtedly help facilitate and enable them to regain some momentum if, in fact, he is the one that assumes the leadership role.”
According to the August – November Stability and Security in Iraq Report:\textsuperscript{1443}

The emergence of Abu Ayub al-Masri as leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq demonstrated its flexibility and depth, as well as its reliance on non-Iraqis. Al-Masri benefited from detailed knowledge of former al-Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi’s planning as well as his own extensive operational experience, allowing him to carry forward many of his predecessor’s existing strategies. Al-Masri has attempted to set the tone for the Iraqi jihad and to solidify the perception of continued strong leadership within al-Qaeda in Iraq. Since al-Masri assumed leadership, al-Qaeda in Iraq has continued its main strategy of instigating sectarian violence using high profile attacks against Shi’a civilians.

\textbf{Al Qa’ida in the Two Rivers Without Zarqawi}

The level of damage Zarqawi’s death would do to Al Qa’ida was almost impossible to predict. Reports of divisions in Al Qa’ida sometimes seemed to owe as much to wishful thinking and disinformation as fact. The US had, however, scored increasing success against the overall structure of organization over the previous year, and its intelligence and targeting capabilities had improved significantly. How much of this came from new intelligence methods. How much came from Iraqi informers inside and outside Al Qa’ida is hard to determine. The US emphasized Iraqi sources but this may be to protect intelligence sources and methods and partly political warfare.

Much depended on just how much information the US captured that revealed Al Qa’ida's overall organization and cell structure. ABC reporting indicated that US and Iraqi forces conducted 17 simultaneous raids around Baghdad after they confirmed that Zarqawi was dead and seized a "treasure trove" of information about Al Qa’ida in Mesopotamia. There had been a massive surveillance and targeting effort underway to find Zarqawi, and they could immediately deploy the resources devoted to go after secondary targets.

It still was far from clear; however, that the Coalition and Iraqi government could go on to successfully attack the entire organization. If much did survive, it could take on a less extreme and more Iraqi character, and Zarqawi’s death could have allowed him to be treated as a martyr and even be spun into a kind of “victory.” The bulk of Al Qa’ida in Mesopotamia was Iraqi, not foreign, and it had developed a highly compartmented organization, with regional emirs and cells with a high degree of isolation and security and a high degree of independence. The end result might have been that most of Al Qa’ida survived, and even “moderated” in ways that expanded its reach in ways Zarqawi’s extremism prevented.

Nevertheless, many analysts suggested that the individual would have a difficult undertaking in establishing the same influence that Zarqawi held over the disparate Islamist movements, particularly given the scale of Coalition and Iraqi successes in attacking Al Qa’ida as an organization.\textsuperscript{1444} This suggested that without a unifying personality, elements could splinter off into independent movements or cells, be absorbed into more Sunni “nationalist” or “rejectionist” groups or simply cease to exist in any coherent or significant way.

Guido Steinberg, a former counterterrorism advisor to Gerhard Schroeder, stated, “It’s a great loss for these jihadist networks…I don’t think there is any person in Iraq able to control this network the way Zarqawi did…He was the only person in Iraq who could provide the glue.”\textsuperscript{1445} A senior Italian counter-terrorism official made similar comments, "His image has had a huge impact on radicalization and recruitment…in the intercepts of suspects, they constantly refer to
him. He’s the hero, the man who fights with few weapons and few resources against the American monster in Iraq…They talk more about him than bin Laden or Zawahiri.  

Others took a different stand. Nawaf Obaid, director of the Saudi National Security Assessment Project postulated that there were other foreign Islamist groups in Iraq with more experience and “have more weaponry and money at their disposal.” For example Obaid said that there were already Egyptian and Saudi-based groups independent of Zarqawi and al-Qa’ida and that other units were composed of fighters who had experience in the Algerian civil war. Some sources indicate Zarqawi’s network at least cooperated on some minimal level with these groups. He entered into an alliance with the Salafist Group for Call and Combat, an Algerian-based movement that frequently targeted Europe. The group swore allegiance to Zarqawi in 2005 and sent some of its fighters to Iraq. In return, Zarqawi killed Algerian diplomats and denounced France, the group’s primary target.

The situation was further complicated by the release of a document which Iraq’s past national security advisor, Mouwafak al-Rubaie, said had been taken from Zarqawi’s "pocket," but Major General However MG William Caldwell stated was obtained by US forces about three weeks prior to the raid on Zarqawi’s house and had helped them carry out the raid against the Zarqawi. The first part of the document indicated that Zarqawi/Al Qa’ida in Iraq was very concerned about the state of the insurgency and Coalition victories. The second part defined the goal of Al Qa'ida in Iraq as being to "entangle the American forces into another war." The third part laid out how that "war" will be started through a propaganda and terror campaign that implicates the Shi'a. The exact source of the document was unclear, and it was remarkably clear of the usual references to religion and Al Qa'ida's ideology.

The translation of the document provided by the Iraqi government read as follows, and -- if nothing else -- provided interesting insights into one possible future strategy for Al Qa'ida:

The situation and conditions of the resistance in Iraq have reached a point that requires a review of the events and of the work being done inside Iraq. Such a study is needed in order to show the best means to accomplish the required goals, especially that the forces of the National Guard have succeeded in forming an enormous shield protecting the American forces and have reduced substantially the losses that were solely suffered by the American forces. This is in addition to the role, played by the Shi'a (the leadership and masses) by supporting the occupation, working to defeat the resistance and by informing on its elements.

As an overall picture, time has been an element in affecting negatively the forces of the occupying countries, due to the losses they sustain economically in human lives, which are increasing with time. However, here in Iraq, time is now beginning to be of service to the American forces and harmful to the resistance for the following reasons:

1. By allowing the American forces to form the forces of the National Guard, to reinforce them and enable them to undertake military operations against the resistance.

2. By undertaking massive arrest operations, invading regions that have an impact on the resistance, and hence causing the resistance to lose many of its elements.

3. By undertaking a media campaign against the resistance resulting in weakening its influence inside the country and presenting its work as harmful to the population rather than being beneficial to the population.

4. By tightening the resistance's financial outlets, restricting its moral options and by confiscating its ammunition and weapons.

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5. By creating a big division among the ranks of the resistance and jeopardizing its attack operations, it has weakened its influence and internal support of its elements, thus resulting in a decline of the resistance's assaults.

6. By allowing an increase in the number of countries and elements supporting the occupation or at least allowing to become neutral in their stand toward us in contrast to their previous stand or refusal of the occupation.

7. By taking advantage of the resistance's mistakes and magnifying them in order to misinform.

Based on the above points, it became necessary that these matters should be treated one by one:

1. To improve the image of the resistance in society, increase the number of supporters who are refusing occupation and show the clash of interest between society and the occupation and its collaborators. To use the media for spreading an effective and creative image of the resistance.

2. To assist some of the people of the resistance to infiltrate the ranks of the National Guard in order to spy on them for the purpose of weakening the ranks of the National Guard when necessary, and to be able to use their modern weapons.

3. To reorganize for recruiting new elements for the resistance.

4. To establish centers and factories to produce and manufacture and improve on weapons and to produce new ones.

5. To unify the ranks of the resistance, to prevent controversies and prejudice and to adhere to piety and follow the leadership.

6. To create division and strife between American and other countries and among the elements disagreeing with it.

7. To avoid mistakes that will blemish the image of the resistance and show it as the enemy of the nation.

In general and despite the current bleak situation, we think that the best suggestion in order to get out of this crisis is to entangle the American forces into another war against another country or with another of our enemy force, that is to try and inflame the situation between America and Iraq or between America and the Shi'a in general.

Specifically the Sistani Shi'a, since most of the support that the Americans are getting is from the Sistani Shi’a, then, there is a possibility to instill differences between them and to weaken the support line between them; in addition to the losses we can inflict on both parties. Consequently, to embroil America in another war against another enemy is the answer that we find to be the most appropriate, and to have a war through a delegate has the following benefits:

1. To occupy the Americans by another front will allow the resistance freedom of movement and alleviate the pressure imposed on it.

2. To dissolve the cohesion between the Americans and the Shi’a will weaken and close this front.

3. To have a loss of trust between the Americans and the Shi’a will cause the Americans to lose many of their spies.

4. To involve both parties, the Americans and the Shi’a, in a war that will result in both parties being losers.
5. Thus, the Americans will be forced to ask the Sunni for help.

6. To take advantage of some of the Shi'a elements that will allow the resistance to move among them.

7. To weaken the media's side which is presenting a tarnished image of the resistance, mainly conveyed by the Shi'a.

8. To enlarge the geographical area of the resistance movement.

9. To provide popular support and cooperation by the people.

The resistance fighters have learned from the result and the great benefits they reaped, when a struggle ensued between the Americans and the Army of Al-Mahdi. However, we have to notice that this trouble or this delegated war that must be ignited can be accomplished through:

1. A war between the Shi'a and the Americans.

2. A war between the Shi'a and the secular population (such as Ayad 'Alawi and al-Jalabi.)

3. A war between the Shi'a and the Kurds.

4. A war between Ahmad al-Halabi and his people and Ayad 'Alawi and his people.

5. A war between the group of al-Hakim and the group of al-Sadr.

6. A war between the Shi'a of Iraq and the Sunni of the Arab countries in the gulf.

7. A war between the Americans and Iraq. We have noticed that the best of these wars to be ignited is the one between the Americans and Iran, because it will have many benefits in favor of the Sunni and the resistance, such as:

1. Freeing the Sunni people in Iraq, who are (30 percent) of the population and under the Shi'a Rule.

2. Drowning the Americans in another war that will engage many of their forces.

3. The possibility of acquiring new weapons from the Iranian side, either after the fall of Iran or during the battles.

4. To entice Iran towards helping the resistance because of its need for its help.

5. Weakening the Shi'a supply line.

The question remains, how to draw the Americans into fighting a war against Iran? It is not known whether American is serious in its animosity towards Iraq, because of the big support Iran is offering to America in its war in Afghanistan and in Iraq. Hence, it is necessary first to exaggerate the Iranian danger and to convince America and the west in general, of the real danger coming from Iran, and the following would do this:

1. By disseminating threatening messages against American interests and the American people and attribute them to a Shi'a Iranian side.

2. By executing operations of kidnapping hostages and implicating the Shi'a Iranian side.

3. By advertising that Iran has chemical and nuclear weapons and is threatening the west with these weapons.
4. By executing exploding operations in the west and accusing Iran by planting Iranian Shi'a fingerprints and evidence.

5. By declaring the existence of a relationship between Iran and terrorist groups (as termed by the Americans).

6. By disseminating bogus messages about confessions showing that Iran is in possession of weapons of mass destruction or that there are attempts by the Iranian intelligence to undertake terrorist operations in America and the West and against Western interests.

Let us hope for success and for God's help.

Part of the difficulty inherent in making “guesstimates” of what a post-Zarqawi Iraq would look like was due to the fact that it was never clear exactly what role he played in the organization, and how much influence he exerted over the overall Sunni Islamist insurgent movement. It was possible that his death could have no effect on the elements of the insurgency and some groups could be strengthened by the loss of the al-Qa'ida leader. Some also speculated that those Sunni areas that were once cowed into passive support of Zarqawi by fear would now be free to join the “reconciliation” process being pushed by al-Maliki.1450

Exogenous factors will have a critical impact. Much of the answer to whether Zarqawi’s death had lasting impact, or had the same temporary impact as Saddam’s capture and the death of his sons, will depend on the political success of the new Iraqi government that was just coming into office as he died. Zarqawi’s death coincided with the long-awaited appointment of the ministers of defense, interior and national security. The new government also sought to exploit his death by taking a range of important actions. These included freeing detainees and bringing Sunnis and Ba’athists back into government and the Iraqi forces; investigating American “abuses;” reaching out to Sunnis; cleaning up the Ministry of Interior, security forces, police forces, and guards; dealing with the militias and irregulars; cleaning up Baghdad; and appointing the group to review the constitution.

There was no way the new government could implement all of these actions overnight, however, and any effort to determine how successful it could be had to play out over a year or more. The deterioration of Iraq since the political turmoil over the constitutional referendum, and December 15 election, did not, however, have to continue. There were important options to correct the situations and some were underway. The questions that counted were how soon, how real, and how lasting government action would be.

In summary, however, there was little doubt that Zarqawi’s death had a positive impact. There was no other figure in the insurgency that captured Iraq and the world’s attention. Most other leaders were nearly faceless and many were unknown. At the same time, Zarqawi’s extremism had sometimes been a liability. His cruelty and calls for Jihad against Shi’ites, his willingness to attack civilians and fellow Muslims, helped push at least some Sunnis away from the insurgency, divided even some elements of Al Qa’ida in Mesopotamia, and been a partial liability. There was at least some risk that his death would allow the surviving insurgency to broaden its base.

Subsequent deterioration of the security environment in Iraq led Zalmay Khalilzad to conclude that “in terms of the level of violence, [the death of al-Zarqawi] has not had any impact at this point.” On July 4, the central morgue announced that it received 1,595 bodies in June, which
represented a 16 percent rise since May. According to information provided by the morgue deputy, the death toll for June 2006 was roughly double the 879 bodies received in June 2005. Shortly after al-Zarqawi’s death, Al-Qa’ida in Iraq declared via an Internet statement that Abu Hamza al-Muhajir would become the organization’s new leader. And on June 15, the US military officially reported that Abu Ayyub al-Masri was the same person described as successor to al-Zarqawi on the web posting. Reacting to this announcement, US Major General William Caldwell said, “Al-Masri’s intimate knowledge of al-Qa’ida in Iraq and his close relationship with [al-Zarqawi’s] operations will undoubtedly help facilitate and enable them to regain some momentum if, in fact, he is the one that assumes the leadership role”.

Brian Fishman, an associate in the Combating Terrorism Center a the US Military Academy at West Point wrote that a key challenge for al-Mujahir would be striking “a balance between appealing to secular and tribal Sunnis in Iraq, some of whom likely provided intelligence that helped doom Zarqawi, while maintaining an insular terrorist network that can sustain potentially weakening criticism from Islamic, Arab, and Western sources.”

Over the summer, there were signs that Zarqawi’s successor was diversifying his support base. According to a Pentagon consultant, “Zarqawi was a hard-liner in his recruitment practices, while al-Masri adopted a “big tent approach. People who were previously excluded from Al Qa’ida in Iraq because they [lacked] exceeding levels of fanaticism [were] now allowed in.”

But in large part, concern over the heightened state sectarian violence in the country and the proliferation of death squads put discussion of the developing role of al-Qa’ida in Iraq on the back burner. A US defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity said, “The sectarian violence is at such a decibel level that people aren’t hearing the al-Qa’ida in Iraq violence...It hasn’t gone away, but you can’t hear it over the din.”

In early September, Iraq’s national security adviser Mouwaffak al-Rubaie announced the arrest of the second-most senior figure in al-Qa’ida in Iraq, Hamed Jumaa Farid al-Saeedi, also known as Abu Humam or Abu Rana. Al-Rubaie described the arrest as a major strike against al-Qa’ida, asserting, “We believe that al-Qa’ida in Iraq suffers from a serious leadership crisis. Our troops have dealt fatal and painful blows to the organization.”

But the arrest had to be put in perspective:

- First, it was unclear whether the characterization of Abu Human as the “Number 2” of al-Qa’ida in Iraq was a meaningful one. While the command structure of al-Qa’ida was unknown, some experts described it as a rather loose organization that could be characterized more as school of thought than a defined group. Coalition forces have reported a number of times in the past to have captured or killed the Number 2.
- Second, it was intuitive that another individual would take Abu Human’s position and become the second-in-command. The organization relied on a cyclical process of recruitment, rather than a finite group of individuals.

Third, the elimination of a senior figure was not necessarily indication that the group itself would weaken. The persistence of al-Qa’ida after the death of al-Zarqawi demonstrated the organization’s ability to adapt and regroup. And over the past two years, the ideological underpinnings of al-Qa’ida have proliferated among Sunni Arab insurgent groups, indicating that its doctrine and strategies would likely outlive the loss of its leader.
A September GAO report supported a Department of Defense transcript which stated that al-Qa’ida in Iraq continued to operate after Zarqawi’s death due to its “resilient, semi-autonomous cellular structure of command and control.”

It appeared, however, that al-Masri was trying to unite the Iraqi insurgency in a way that Zarqawi had not. Particularly in the spring of 2006 Zarqawi had supported insurgent attacks on Iraqis, including Sunni “nationalist” insurgents. Al-Masri’s speeches in the fall had a reconciling tone that sought to recruit Sunni insurgents from tribes across Iraq.

In early October the US military released the translation of an al-Qa’ida letter to al-Zarqawi recovered at site of his death. The letter appeared to have been written in December 2005 by a man who called himself Atiyah – thought to be a senior al-Qa’ida leader. The letter expressed the need for “steadfastness” in the jihad and that the longer the war in Iraq continued the better. The letter also urged al-Zarqawi to reduce attacks against other Sunni opposition leaders. Atiyah said that al-Qa’ida in Iraq should strive to unite Sunnis against the occupation – dividing Sunni tribes could lead to a devastating lack of support for al-Qa’ida in Iraq’s mission.

The letter was released a week after a speech by al-Masri was posted on an al-Qa’ida in Iraq website. Al-Masri offered Sunni tribal leaders amnesty if they joined al-Qa’ida in Iraq. He said al-Qa’ida needed the help of all Sunnis – particularly religious leaders and scientists – and that they should unite together against the occupation. It appeared that al-Masri was taking the advice given to al-Zarqawi to heart. It was unclear how long al-Masri would remain the head of al-Qa’ida in Iraq – the Iraqi national security adviser announced the same week that US and Iraqi forces were very close to capturing him. Al-Masri’s recruitment video made it clear that the insurgency had adapted well to changes in leadership, but additional Iraqi jihadists would not be turned down.

The Defense Intelligence Agency’s report to Congress on November 15 said that al-Masri had likely increased ties with senior al-Qa’ida leaders, which could “enhance al-Qa’ida in Iraq’s external attack capabilities.”

The day after Saddam Hussein received the verdict condemning him to death, the former Ba’ath party threatened to attack the Green Zone if the sentence was carried out. An internet statement by the group said that the party would “use all possible means to destroy embassies, as well as the headquarters of intelligence and treacherous organizations.”

Another internet video posted in mid-November and attributed to al-Masri reaffirmed al-Qa’ida in Iraq’s perseverance against US military “occupation.” The video mocked President Bush’s strategy in Iraq after republicans suffered heavily in mid-term congressional elections. Al-Masri challenged the US to keep troops in Iraq and said that he had 12,000 fighters under his control. He also called on all Sunnis to support a Sunni autonomous region in Western Iraq under Abu Omar al-Baghdadi. He added that the al-Qa’ida would not stop fighting until the White House was destroyed, leaving little doubt at the end of 2006 that the insurgency in Iraq was going to concede defeat in the near future.

In his speech to the Senate Armed Services Committee on November 15, Lt. Gen. Michael Maples, Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, said, “Al-Qa’ida in Iraq’s targeting strategies have not changed significantly in the wake of al-Zarqawi’s death on 7 June, and attacks against Iraqi government targets and Coalition forces continue apace.” He also said that al-Qa’ida in Iraq tried to “sow sectarian tension and undermine confidence in democracy…” The
DIA concluded that al-Qa’ida in Iraq still “operates with relative freedom in Iraq’s Sunni-dominated territories.”

The New York Times reported that Sunni insurgents with ties to Al-Qa’ida started attacking coalition forces using more conventional tactics. In mid-November US forces fought insurgents in the town of Turki, in Diyala Province. US commanders said that the Sunni insurgents deployed a platoon sized unit and stood and fought in “perfect military formation” and “were disciplined and well trained, with well-aimed shots.”

The insurgents built trenches and had stored caches, including antiaircraft missiles. After two days of pitched battles, US forces called in airstrikes. At least 72 insurgents were killed as were two American officers, but the conventional military battle surprised US forces who were accustomed to hunting down single insurgents after a sniper attack or a carbomb explosion. The US military said they suspected that several training grounds for insurgents existed in rural Diyala Province – where coalition forces had little oversight.

MNF-Iraq announced in late November that since 2004, coalition forces captured over 7,000 al-Qa’ida in Iraq operatives, and 30 senior level al-Qa’ida were caught since July 2006. Gen. Caldwell said that the debriefings of al-Qa’ida members led the US military to conclude that al-Qa’ida in Iraq had three main goals.

- The first goal, as they have stated to us in the briefings, is controlling the Sunni population. Al-Qa’ida in Iraq is looking to dominate Baghdad. They hope to convince the Sunni people that resistance to unity is a realistic goal and that al-Qa’ida in Iraq is the best avenues for sectarian-based resistance. Part of this strategy, they told us, is that murder and intimidation of Sunnis who are brave and foresighted enough to work towards reconciliation.

- Their second goal is to weaken the Iraqi government. A strong and unified and representative Iraqi government that is the only legitimate authority to terrorism, they want to weaken. So al-Qa’ida in Iraq consistently looks to destroy faith in the democratically elected representatives of the Iraqi people. It seeks to achieve this through constant attacks against public servants and those who may serve with them. Al-Qa’ida in Iraq aims to make Sunnis fear cooperative with their own government. They want to convince people that hope is misplaced, that the government cannot offer security or stability.

The third goal they stated in these debriefings is to attack Shi’a civilians. Al-Qa’ida seeks to divide. They do this by targeting Shi’a, by seeking to create distrust and fear in order to incite retribution. We know that al-Qa’ida in Iraq has issued orders to attack the Shi’a population. The attacks in Sadr City last week were a vivid reminder of al-Qa’ida in Iraq’s strategy of executing high-visibility, high-casualty producing attacks against civilian targets in order to sow division among Iraqis along sectarian lines.

During 2006, al-Qa’ida in Iraq absorbed ten additional Sunni armed groups, according to a report published in the New York Times. These groups also joined the ‘Islamic State of Iraq’ – the eight province autonomous region declared by the al-Qa’ida dominated Mujahedeen Shura Council. Some of the groups that joined the Mujahedeen Shura Council and Islamic State in 2006 included the Society of True Believers, Supporters of Monotheism and Our Creed, the Knights of Monotheism, the Army of the Abrahamic Tradition, the Army of the Prophet’s Companions, and the Army of the Conquerors, which broke from the Islamic Army in Iraq.

The report also noted the lose affiliations to the al-Qa’ida network of the Islamic Army in Iraq, the Mujahedeen Army, and the Ansar al-Sunna Army. In September, members from the Mujahedeen Shura Council and Ansar al-Sunna met, indicating that some level of coordination began taking place between the two groups. Al-Qa’ida in Iraq also announced that the 1920
Revolutionary Brigades – which previously avoided sectarian conflict – joined the Islamic State of Iraq.  

These developments in the larger al-Qa’ida network in 2006 – most of which occurred after the death of al-Zarqawi - indicated that al-Qa’ida in Iraqi sought to unify the insurgency. Attacks by those groups affiliated with the Mujahedeen Shura Council continued to target US troops, but also took on a distinctly sectarian element.

Increased alliance between insurgent groups seemed to strengthen the insurgency at the end of 2006 and into 2007. If Abu Ayub al-Masri – leader of al-Qa’ida in Iraq - and Abu Omar al-Baghdadi – emir of the Islamic State of Iraq – could successfully unite the vast number of insurgent groups 2007 would most likely see a rise in coordinated large-scale attacks typical of al-Qa’ida against coalition troops and Iraqi Shi’ites, but more importantly, widespread support from the Sunni community. Sunni insurgent leaders clearly saw a united effort as vital in retaliating against attacks by the largest Shi’ite militia, al-Sadr’s Mahdi Army.

As the nature of the conflict gradually transformed from an insurgency against occupying forces into a sectarian war, the growth of a broader mass movement towards violence became ever-more important.

X. Other Sunni Arab Insurgent Groups: The “Nationalists?”

At the beginning of the insurgency, Coalition forces tended to refer to Iraq’s more mainstream insurgents as “former regime loyalists” (FRLs), or “former regime elements (FREs). As the insurgency has evolved, so did the terminology used to describe it, and these terms fell out of favor with analysts as time progressed. At the same time, Iraq’s Arab Sunnis are only beginning to forge new political identities out of the power vacuum left by Saddam Hussein’s dictatorship, and a number of analysts feel that they have either tended to become more Islamist or to move towards possible accommodation with the new government.

While most of Iraq’s ruling elite during Saddam Hussein’s decades of dictatorship was Sunni, the top elite came from a small portion of Sunnis, many with family backgrounds in what were originally rural military families. The top elite had strong ties not only to Saddam’s extended family, but to Tikritis in general, and the al-Bu Nasir tribe and its Bejat clan and Majid family. The vast majority of Sunnis got little special benefit from Saddam’s rule, and many Sunnis suffered from his oppression in the same way as other Iraqis.

Planning Before, During, and Immediately After the War

It is uncertain if Saddam’s regime took effective action to create such groups before, during, or immediately after the war. There has been little unclassified intelligence on what the Coalition and Iraqi government has learned about such groups since the insurgency gathered momentum in 2003. However, the bulk of the evidence seems to indicate that any such planning was largely ineffective, except for the creation of large weapons caches designed to support the largely non-existent Popular Army and service operations by the Fedayeen. These efforts may have eased the rise of the insurgency after the war, but the remnants of Saddam’s regime were slow to organize, many leaders were quickly captured, and many of those who joined the insurgency were more pro-Sunni and/or pro-Ba’ath than pro-Saddam.
An analyst with the Crisis Group conducted interviews with Ba’athists and officers of the former security apparatus (including Special Security) in Baghdad, Tikrit, Bayji and Mosul and found that,

There is no evidence that Saddam designed a guerrilla strategy in anticipation of military defeat. Indeed, the period immediately following the overthrow of the Ba’athist regime was remarkably calm; US forces, in effect, suddenly found themselves without an enemy… The fallen regime’s power structures collapsed almost instantaneously, laying bare the extent to which Saddam Hussein’s authority – including over his own security apparatus – relied on coercion rather than loyalty. Senior Baath party members as well as army and intelligence officers initially were at a loss, facing both an uncertain future and a population that, in its vast majority, appeared willing to give the United States a chance. Far from preparing a collective comeback, these so-called Saddamists above all were preoccupied with personal survival.

Elements of the former regime, some Shi’ites included…soon helped set up small cells of fighters. But this was not planned ahead of time and reflected neither a desire to restore the past nor ideological attachment to Baathism; rather, these cells developed gradually, initially drawing individuals angered by dim prospects, resentful of the occupation and its indignities, and building on pre-existing party, professional, tribal, familial or geographic--including neighbourhood--networks.

Former regime officials were, of course, ideal candidates and soon became the vanguard of the armed opposition, combining as they did idleness, relevant military and intelligence skills as well as knowledge of the whereabouts of vast weapons stockpiles and relatively scarcer cash reserves concealed by the regime in anticipation of the projected defense of Baghdad…Former hierarchical structures in the Baath party or the army helped structure what initially were amorphous cells…But for the most part this had little to do with Ba’athist loyalty; from the outset, the armed opposition’s discourse build on patriotic and religious themes at the expense of a largely discredited ideology.

Even at an early stage, when foreign fighters in all likelihood played a negligible part in day-to-day operations, the upsurge in attacks during the month of Ramadan in 2003 (27 October-25 November) illustrates the extent to which the struggle was framed as a religious duty…A handful of groups claimed to be acting on behalf of the Baath, but they quickly were put on the defensive, having to account for the former regime’s perversion of Baathism…its crimes…and the 2003 debacle…While some fighters probably still looked upon Saddam Hussein as a symbol of anti-imperialist resistance…virtually all armed groups dissociated themselves from the former president…and some openly denounced him.

Nor is there persuasive backing for the view that the current battle is but the extension of a global jihadist war. Most analysts now concur that the Ba’athist regime did not entertain relations with al-Qa’ida and foreign volunteers invited by Saddam to die in his defense had nothing to do with Osama bin Laden’s organization.

The impact of foreign jihadists grew over time, but during the early stages of the insurgency it appears to have been negligible and al-Qa’ida in particular remained absent, claiming none of the spectacular attacks orchestrated in 2003…Suicide missions only appeared well into the occupation.

In short, resort to static explanations of the insurgency tends both to misjudge what in fact has been a dynamic, evolving phenomenon and, importantly, to downplay the role played in its emergence and subsequent development by specific US policies and practices.

Such reports may, however, understated the level of organization involved. Some US intelligence experts said on background before the invasion that Saddam’s regime and intelligence and security services were organizing for a post invasion resistance. The broad dispersal of weapons and arms in much of Iraq may have been designed to support such activities, and a relatively sophisticated operation did develop by mid to late-2003 that included individuals with ties to senior Ba’athists who were operating in Syria as well as Iraq. In Cradle of Conflict, Michael Knights provides a detailed account of this scenario. He describes a well organized, and calculated campaign led by the Ba’athist regime to build an effective resistance force, both during and after the war:
ISG interviews, the plan was known within the top echelon as “the Challenge Project” and involved the creation of a two-stage guerrilla campaign: the first would take place in tandem with the conventional defense of Baghdad and the second was intended to take effect after the fall of Iraq’s capital. The plans sought to inflict attritional losses on the US military to deter it from advancing all the way to Baghdad or to shorten the period of the postwar occupation…

The first phase, executed before and during Operation Iraqi Freedom, involved setting the conditions for prolonged guerrilla warfare. The regime’s longstanding fear of ammunition shortages during wartime led to the establishment of ammunition supply points (ASP) throughout Iraq… An estimated 650,000 to 1 million tons of weapons and explosives were distributed throughout the country in a deliberate attempt to sustain local resistance during and after the war. In addition to Iraq’s well-known arms depots—some of which covered more than a hundred square kilometers—more than ten thousand forward ASPs were created in schools, hospitals, mosques, fields, and warehouses…. The ISG calculated the average size of Iraqi arms dumps to be forty tons, although the presence of some superdepots indicate that statistically the vast majority of arms were small stores consisting of less than a ton of small arms, RPGs, artillery shells, and land mines…

The sudden cessation of regime communications and citywide disappearance of the Ba’athist leadership in Baghdad on April 10 signaled the activation of the postwar phase of this resistance effort… Just as Iraqi air-defense gunners were offered rewards to shoot down US aircrafts and deliver pilots, Iraqi resisters would be paid to carry out attacks on occupation forces, with bonuses for successful attacks. The release of tens of thousands of criminals in late 2002 created a demographic base from which the resistance effort could draw even if the broader Iraqi populace could not be drawn into the resistance.

The Ba’athist regime had also developed close prewar ties with radical Salafist militants in Iraq and local terrorist groups such as Ansar al-Islam, thereby creating temporary local alliances of mutual convenience in the post-war period…

Throughout 2001 and 2002, Mukhabarat officers liaised with terrorists in the Ansar al-Islam enclave in northern Iraq and facilitated the supply of funding, explosives, and vehicles. The Mukhabarat and Ansar al-Islam both brought foreign militants to Iraq, a practice that the Ba’athist regime had carried out since the 1970s… After the war, this flow continued, encouraged by Ba’athist elements in Syria and by transnational Salafist groups such as Ansar al-Islam and cells associated with Jordanian terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. The presence of these latter two groups ensures that even if the Ba’athist cause failed, Iraq would have a prolonged violent struggle.

**The Motives of the More “Nationalist” Insurgents**

What is clear is that the insurgent elements with ties to the former regime, and/or which are more secular or nationalist in character, have become less active than the more religious and extremist insurgents, and have done much less to seek publicity through tools like the Internet. Yet, such insurgents may have considerably more support and sympathy from Iraqi Sunnis as a whole than the Islamists.

Public opinion polls and other sources about Iraqi Sunni attitudes, give several indications about those Sunnis who say they support attacks on Coalition forces. Most Sunni Arabs clearly do want rights and privileges for Sunnis, but they also tend to be nationalists in the sense they consistently favor a strong, unified Iraqi state.

This has been clear from public opinion polls in Sunni areas since mid-2003, and Arab Sunnis have opposed the idea of splitting Iraq into federations since it became an issue in mid-2005.

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Like Iraq’s Arab Shi’ites, polls also show that Iraqi Sunnis are generally religious and see Islam as a key aspect of their lives, but do not favor a theocratic state.

At the same time, Arab Sunnis show far more general support for violence against the Coalition. Surveys in mid-2003 found that some 37% of Sunnis supported violence against Coalition forces. A poll conducted by the Coalition in summer 2005 indicated that nearly 45 percent of the population supported the insurgent attacks.\(^{1472}\)

The overall motives of Arab Sunnis are complex, however, and it seems almost certain that this is true of many who participate in the insurgency or support it. While polling efforts in Iraq face many obstacles and their results remain uncertain, a poll conducted in January 2006 provides results that tracked closely with other major polls and can provide useful insights. The poll found that 83% of Arab Sunnis did not feel Saddam should have been ousted, and 93% of Iraqi Arab Sunnis thought that Iraq was moving in the wrong direction.\(^{1473}\) Some 88% of Arab Sunnis approved of attacks on US led forces.\(^{1474}\) A total of 83% wanted the US to leave Iraq in six months.

At the same time, only 7% of Iraqis approved attacks on Iraqi forces and 93% disapproved. Even among Sunnis, only 24% “approved somewhat,” and 76% disapproved, of which 24% disapproved strongly. When it came to attacks on Iraqi civilians, 99% disapproved. Nearly 100% disapproved, of which 95% disapproved strongly.\(^{1475}\)

**Ba’athists, Non-Ba’athists, or Semi-Ba’athists?**

US analysts now acknowledge that Ba’athist and ex-regime loyalists represent only a declining part of a Sunni insurgency that is now dominated by religious movements – but some feel ex-Ba’athists still played an important role in leadership, organization, and financing and feel they remain a key force among newly radicalized Iraqi Sunnis.

According to the CIA reports, the Sunni loss of power, prestige, and economic influence has been a key motivating factor, as is unemployment and a loss of personal status – direct and disguised unemployment among young Sunni men has been 40-60% in many areas ever since the fall of Saddam Hussein. Many insurgents are motivated by tribal or family grievances, nationalism and religious duty. Others are motivated by the US occupation – particularly those who have lost a loved one fighting US forces – and the political and economic turmoil that accompanied the occupation.\(^{1476}\)

The Department of Defense reported in its May 26, 2006 report to Congress that,\(^{1477}\) Saddam loyalists are no longer considered a significant threat to the MNF-I end state and the Iraqi government. However, former regime members remain an important element involved in sustaining and enabling the violence in Iraq, using their former internal and external networks and military and intelligence expertise involving weapons and tactics. Saddamists are no longer relevant as a cohesive threat, having mostly splintered into Rejectionists or terrorist and foreign fighters.

Yet, this does not mean that ex-Ba’athists do not play a role. The Ba’ath Party did not dissolve when the CPA formally abolished it in May 2003. It reorganized with a new structure, established a new politburo in 2004, and at least some elements operated from a de facto sanctuary in Syria.\(^{1478}\) At the same time, many full-time and part-time Iraqi groups associated with the Ba’ath are linked more by tribe, family, and locality than any sense of Ba’ath political identity.
US and Iraqi Interim Government officials – such as the MNF commander General Casey and Iraqi Defense Minister Hazan Shaalan – said throughout 2005 that they believed that Ba’ath leaders in Syria coordinate with at least some of the Ba’ath sympathizers in Iraq. The office of the Iraqi Prime Minister called for the arrest of six senior members of the former regime in March 2005.\textsuperscript{1479}

- Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri: Believed to be the leader of the New Regional Command and New Ba’ath Party. (He died on November 10, 2005.)
- Muhammed Younis al-Ahmad: financial facilitator and operational leader of the New Regional Command and New Ba’ath Party.
- Rashid Ta’an Kazim: Central Ba’ath Party Regional Chairman in Al Anbar Province.
- Abd Al-Baqi Abd Al-Karim Al-Abdallah Al-Sa’adun: Recruiter and financer of terrorist activity in eastern and central Iraq.
- Aham Hasan Kaka al-Ubaydi: A former intelligence officer, and now associated with Ansar Al Islam.
- Fadhi Ibrahim Mahmud Mashadani (aka Abu Huda): Top member of the New Ba’ath Party and a key financier of insurgent and terrorist activity.

Field leaders reportedly include Mohammed Younis al-Ahmad, a former aide to Saddam Hussein, and Ibrahim Sabawi, Hussein’s half brother and a former security director. They also benefit from the fact that some elements of the leadership of the Iraqi 5\textsuperscript{th} Corps are still in Mosul, and Syria has provided a covert sanctuary for at least some Iraq Ba’athist leaders.\textsuperscript{1480}

There have, however, been many important successes in capturing former Ba’ath leaders turned insurgents. The former aide to the Chief of Staff of Intelligence for the Saddam regime, Muhammed Hila Hammad Ubaydi (Abu Ayman), was apprehended by Iraqi forces in March of 2006. The leader of the Secret Islamic Army in the Northern Babil Province, Abu Ayman was suspected of having ties to Zarqawi and has been accused of numerous kidnappings and IED attacks. Information on his whereabouts and network was obtained from his lieutenant, Abu Qatada, a Syrian captured by Coalition forces in December 2005.\textsuperscript{1481}

It seems likely that the remaining Ba’athist elements in the insurgency can benefit from the fact that they still have access to some of the former regime's money. They do seem to have since steadily tightened their organization and purged suspect members. According to one report, they held a major meeting at Al Hasaka in April or May of 2004 to tighten their structure. This does not mean, however, that they would not be greatly overshadowed by Islamist groups if Iraq were driven into full-scale civil war. It is the Islamists who get the publicity, drive the more visible fighting and have developed the best propaganda efforts.

In late October 2006, the Iraqi Ba’ath Party issued a statement explaining what steps should be taken to rebuild Iraq. The Ba’ath Party told the “occupier” to set a date for withdrawal and to recognize the “resistance fighters.” Members of the resistance would then form a Shura Council and establish a “national unity government,” free from militias. The document stated that minority rights would be assured; “everyone – regardless of the their ethnic origins or religious faiths or sects – shall coexist in a kind of eternal national unity that has characterized the Iraqi people throughout their glorious history.” Following the two-year interim government, the resistance would hold “free and fair” elections. They also called on the US to accept the illegality of the invasion of Iraq and demanded an apology to the Iraq people. The Ba’th viewed US
trained forces as illegitimate and called for the reinstatement of the old Iraqi army. Finally, the statement said that the resistance would continue until the “occupiers” fully left Iraq. 

**Other “Nationalist” Sunni Insurgents**

Furthermore, it seems likely that most of the less extreme or “nationalist” Iraqi-dominated Sunni insurgent groups now have a significant degree of independence from the former Ba'ath leadership. Despite this, it is clear that many cooperate in at least some operations, and that many of the elements with some ties to ex-supporters of Saddam’s regime have some degree of central leadership and coordination.

US experts talk of informal networks that, using tools like the Internet, coordinate operations and exchange data on tactics, targets, and operations. There is evidence of such exchanges between cells in Iraq and outside groups including those in Syria and Afghanistan. Insurgent groups also use the media to get near-real-time information on what other groups and cells are doing and to find out what tactics produce the maximum political and media impact.

Nevertheless, many of the Sunni insurgent groups or cells that do not have ties to extremist groups or former Ba’ath rulers can get money or some degree of leadership from the Ba’athist structures that have emerged since the fall of Saddam Hussein. It is generally misleading to call them “former regime loyalists (FRLs)” or "former regime" elements (FREs). They are rather Sunni nationalists involved in a struggle for current power. This has allowed the insurgency to broaden its base and establish ties to Islamic groups as well.

**The Search for Power and the Possibility of Dialogue**

The relative impact of the “nationalist” Iraqi Sunni insurgent groups and the smaller Islamic extremist groups is uncertain. In some cases, MNF-I and US officials see evidence that secular Sunni groups, and even Hussein loyalists, were cooperating with extreme Islamists. In Mosul, Ba’athists worked with Salafists to attack American troops and derail the election process.

While the two groups have conflicting visions and aspirations for Iraq’s future – and sometimes feud or even kill each other -- their short-term goals are largely the same: instability and insecurity, breaking up the new Iraqi government and depriving it of popular legitimacy, keeping Iraqi forces from becoming effective, and driving the US and MNF-I forces out of Iraq.

In September of 2005, Army Maj. Gen. Richard Zahner acknowledged that the Ba’athist insurgency had been surpassed by a terrorist campaign led by Zarqawi’s group. Speaking to the Washington Post, Zahner said: “You’ll see some of the old regime elements [out] there, mainly just to maintain pressure and, frankly, accountability…But when you look at those individuals central the inflicting of huge amounts of violence, it really is not those folks. The Saddamists, the former regime guys, they’re riding this.” The view that Al Qa’ida in Iraq, not Iraqis loyal to Saddam Hussein (known as “Saddamists”), were becoming the driving element behind the insurgency in the summer and fall of 2005 is, however, controversial.

The “nationalist” Sunni insurgents have also been far more willing and able to acquire leverage in the Iraqi political process. For example, some Sunni Arab nationalist insurgents groups saw the December 15th elections as an opportunity to gain power, and called upon their followers to forgo violence on election day while Al Qa’ida and its allies called for attacks. This seems to have led to outright clashes between elements of Al Qa’ida in Iraq and Sunni nationalists in the
months leading up to the election, particularly in cities within the Sunni Triangle such as Qaim, Taji, Ramadi, and Yusefiya.

**Tensions and Clashes Between Sunni “Nationalists” versus Sunni “Islamic Extremists?”**

Opinions differ as to just how much the different Sunni elements that make up the insurgency are dividing or coalescing. Some analysts suggested in late 2004 and early 2005 that Ba’athists and their former adversaries, such as the Salafists and the Kurds, were finding common cause with foreign fighters. Yet, there were also growing reports of fighting between the more secular and moderate nationalist Sunni insurgents and Sunni Islamic extremists.

This fighting has sometimes occurred at the local level where it seemed more a matter of “turf” than ideology. It has also been driven by fundamentalist groups’ attacks on local Sheiks and leaders.

As has been discussed earlier, Islamist extremists have increasingly provoked broader resentments. The more moderate and nationalist Sunni groups generally do not approve of mass attacks on civilians and on Iraqi Shi’ites. Many do not approve of attempts to provoke a civil war, or to turn the Iraqi insurgency from a struggle for national power to a broader war for control of Islam. These problems have been compounded by the split over whether Iraqi Sunnis should participate in the government and Iraqi forces, if only to act as a counterweight to the Shi’ites and Kurds and without real support for the new Iraqi political process.

These potential divisions have their limits as well. Although most Sunni Arabs do not approve of violent attacks on Iraqi civilians, they may acquiesce to Islamist groups out of a perceived necessity. If the Iraqi government fails to provide them with political representation or a basic level of security and protection from either Shi’ite militias or Sunni Islamists, this may be the “least bad” of many bad options.

The May 2006 “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq” report highlighted some of these difficulties:

> “The current positive effects of intolerance for Al-Qa’ida in Iraq (AQI) among Sunni Arabs may be limited if Sunnis perceive a lack of progress in reconciliation and government participation of increased sectarian violence draws various Sunni insurgency elements closer. Local Sunni Arab groups opposed to AQI lack the organization, money, training, and popular support to counter AQI activity…

> …Operations by Al-Qa’ida in Iraq and associated terrorist groups are facilitated by passive or coerced support from the Sunni population and Sunni Arab insurgent groups, whose activities impede anti-terrorist operations of the Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition forces. The insurgency depends on passive popular support, which, in turn, allows insurgents to coerce other opponents into silence acceptance or active assistance.”

In reality cooperation and conflict were both present in the interaction between these two groups. Both appeared dominant at various stages of the war but neither could be said to be a lasting trend. For example, upon the death of Zarqawi, a statement by the Fedayeen of Saddam highlighted these dualities saying, “Although there were many matters we differed with him on and him with us, but what united us was something greater.”

In September 2006 the leader of al-Qa’ida in Iraq, Abu-Hamzah al-Masri, offered amnesty to opposition Sunni groups, if they joined al-Qa’ida – otherwise they would be targeted with everyone else. The secretary general of the Association of Muslim Scholars said in response,
“This issue is the business of al-Qa’ida and its leader and is none of our business.” He also called on al-Qa’ida not to attack other Sunni resistance groups – they were all united against the “occupiers.” He agreed with al-Qa’ida, however, that the escalating sectarian violence was the fault of al-Maliki’s Shi’ite dominated government. 

The head of the Salah al-Din Tribes Council, Ahmad Naji Jibarah al-Juburi, also commented on al-Qa’ida’s September message:

“Iraq is our Iraq; it does not belong under the leader of the Al-Qa’ida organization who came and entered Iraq to liberate it from the occupation. He did not come to liberate Iraq from its own people. WE are the people of Iraq, and he wants to liberate us, which means that he wants to eliminate us and make Iraq a wasteland void of its people and citizens… Al- Qa’ida helps the occupiers to divide and tear Iraq to shreds.”

He stated that his tribe was not scared of al-Qa’ida and that the threats would go unheeded. He emphasized that al-Qa’ida was an outside force and that Iraqi Sunni tribes were united and capable of running Iraq.

Al-Qa’ida in Iraq posted an internet message on December 1 condemning Sunni Arab politicians who had met with Jordan’s King Abdullah. Al-Qa’ida called the legislators “traitors” to Sunnis.

**Divisions Over Playing a Role in the Political Process**

Sunni Islamist extremist movements made Iraq's political process a primary target before and after the January 30, 2005 elections. Such insurgents feared that a relatively secure and successful election would cement Shi’ite dominance in Iraq and would signal the demise of both the Islamist and Ba’athist visions for the future of Iraq.

On December 29, 2004, Ansar al-Sunna declared, “All polling stations and those in them will be targets for our brave soldiers.” Similarly, the Islamic Army in Iraq warned in mid-January 2005, “Do not allow polling stations in your neighborhood because they put your lives in danger. Do not also interfere with the employees who work in these voting centers, as they will be killed. Keep away from these places as they will be attacked.” On January 23, 2005, Zarqawi released an audiotape saying, “We have declared an all-out war on this evil principle of democracy and those who follow this wrong ideology.”

The more mainstream Sunni groups, however, seem to have recognized that failing to play a political role effectively deprived the Sunnis of power, provided a “blank” check to other political factions, and meant they had little leverage to block developments they opposed. This experience was reinforced by the debates over the new constitution and the obvious cost to Sunnis of not previously participating in the political process.

Sunni efforts to create a new political identity included both the minority that has participated in the new government and political process, some who had boycotted it, and political parties like the Muslim Brotherhood and Iraq Islamic Party. They also included clerical bodies like the Association of Islamic Scholars, which is headed by Dr. Muthanna Harith al-Dhari – an Egyptian educated Islamic scholar—and claims to represent some 6,000 mosques, or 80% of the total.

Iraq’s new president and prime minister encouraged their efforts. The search for a Sunni Minister of Defense, a key factor delaying the creation of a new government, examined some 10 candidates before choosing Sadoon al-Dulaimi in early May 2003. The new leaders also resisted
the calls of other Shi’ites and Kurds for the systematic purging of all Sunnis with ties to the Ba’ath, including many in the Iraqi forces.\footnote{1494}

While the details are unclear, the new Iraqi government and the US also attempted to hold a dialogue with the more moderate insurgents. At least one such effort became public. In summer 2005, a former Iraqi electricity minister, Iyham al-Samarri, announced that he had established a sort of communication organization through which the various insurgent groups could convey their views and concerns to both the elected Iraqi government and the Coalition.\footnote{1495} Al-Samarri had a questionable past and a controversial tenure as electricity minister. Furthermore, it could not be substantiated that al-Samarri had any contact with any insurgents as he said. Not long after he asserted this ability to speak on behalf of the insurgents, militant groups criticized him via the Web saying that he did not speak for them and that he was ‘spreading lies.’

Nevertheless, an Internet statement appeared a week later stating that the Army of the Mujahedeen and the Islamic Army in Iraq had appointed a spokesman, Ibrahim Youssef al-Shammari, to speak on behalf of the two insurgent groups. His identity was confirmed on websites linked to the two militant organizations.\footnote{1496} This suggests some of the militants were moving to form political wings.\footnote{1497} It remained unclear whether such wings would seek to formally run in the elections to come or whether they would seek to simply put forward cogent demands and expectations.

This participation of Sunni insurgents in the Iraqi political process marked a profound shift in their thinking and tactics, and led to a growing rift between such insurgents and al Qa’ida forces in Iraq. This rift became more evident in the fall of 2005, with clashes erupting between al-Qa’ida fighters and Sunni insurgents.\footnote{1498}

There were also growing reports of Iraqi Sunni executions of foreign Sunni Islamic extremists since the first such reports surfaced in November 2004.\footnote{1499} One such case took place on August 13, 2005, when Sunni Iraqis in Ramadi took up arms against Abu Musab Zarqawi’s forces in defense of their Shi’ite neighbors.

The fighting came on the heels of a proclamation by Zarqawi that Ramadi’s 3,000 Shi’ites leave the city of some 200,000 residents. The order was given in retaliation for supposed expulsions of Sunni minorities by Shi’ite militias in the mostly Shi’ite south of Iraq. Yet in Ramadi, members of the Sunni Dulaimi tribe, formed security cordons around Shi’ite homes and fought Zarqawi’s men with grenade launchers and automatic weapons. All told, five foreign fighters and two local tribal fighters were killed.\footnote{1500}

Similar to insurgent use of the media, in March 2006 a group known as the Anbar Revenge Brigade posted an Internet statement claiming that it killed five top members of al-Qa’ida during a campaign to drive them out of Ramadi. Of these fighters four were said to be al-Qa’ida and the fifth a member of Ansar al-Sunnah.\footnote{1501}

Another group, the Anbar Revolutionaries, stated in March to have killed 20 foreign fighters and 33 of their Iraqi sympathizers. This group, which operated in the Anbar province, was composed of nearly 100 fighters, all of who had family members killed by Zarqawi’s al-Qa’ida.\footnote{1502}

Many Sunnis participated in the debate over the constitution and the referendum that followed. During the summer and fall of 2005, Sunni leaders threatened that a constitution forced through without the consent and consideration of the Sunni population would result in a stepped-up insurgency. Nevertheless, many Sunni leaders and voters, including those from a number of

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insurgent-dominated or influenced areas, participated in the October 15, 2005 constitutional referendum.

In the weeks prior to the referendum, Abu Theeb, the commander of a cell of Sunni insurgents north of Baghdad known as the Anger Brigade, traveled the countryside visiting Sunni villages. The message was the same at each stop: Sunnis should register to vote but vote no in the referendum.

Abu Theeb, who has been fighting coalition troops for more than two years, described the boycott of the January election as a mistake. “It is a new jihad…There is a time for fighting, and a time for politics.”1503 Theeb was so determined to ensure a Sunni turnout that he supplied a local polling station with his own guards on the day of the vote. Despite an Al Qa'ida vow to kill anyone, including Sunnis, who participated in the referendum, Theeb ordered his followers to protect the local school to ensure that Sunni voters would be safe. Theeb even reprimanded a young follower for planning an IED attack the night before the election, saying: “I thought we agreed that nothing will happen for the next few days.”1504

Sunnis turned out in far greater numbers for the October referendum than the January 30, 2005 election, giving momentum to Sunni participation in the December 15, 2005 elections for the national assembly. Although no exact figures have been published, Sunni turnout in the October 15, 2005 referendum was much heavier than expected. Overall turnout in the referendum was 63 per cent, up from 58 per cent in January. Moreover, turnout in many Shi’ite and Kurdish-dominated provinces fell below January’s figures, indicating the increase in overall turnout had come from Sunni Arab voters.1505

This did not mean Sunnis supported the constitution. In Salahuddin Province, a Sunni stronghold and home to Saddam Hussein’s family, 81 per cent rejected the constitution. Elsewhere in the country, voting was largely divided along ethnic and sectarian lines. Voting in the mixed province of Diyala, home to both Sunnis and Shi’ites, was illustrative of this split with 51.76 per cent voting yes and 48.24 per cent voting no.1506 It did mean that Sunnis had engaged politically, and not through violence.

This engagement was even more active in the run up to the elections for the national assembly. Even in Tikrit, there were more than two-dozen political groups with offices in Tikrit by November 2005, and young men could be found hanging campaign posters. Some posters even reached out to former members of Saddam’s party. One such poster read, “Vote for us and we promise we will end de-Ba’athification.”1507

The end result was that numerous Sunni candidates ran, and numerous Sunnis voted. Voter turnout figures released by the Iraqi Electoral Commission put turnout in the December 15 election at 70 percent, the highest in any post-Saddam era election held to date. A total 10.9 of Iraq’s 15.6 million registered voters voted in the election, and Sunnis voted heavily in every area where insurgents who opposed political action could not threaten them.1508

The tensions over these different approaches to the political process were compounded by the fact that many Iraqi Sunnis, even those who sympathized with the insurgency, strongly opposed attacks on Sunni recruits to the Iraqi forces, and the killings of Sunnis in local governments.
Iraqi Government Negotiations with “Nationalist” Insurgents

The December 15th election did have a mixed impact. The Sunnis only received about 20% of the seats. Many complained about “fraud” and that they were being allotted fewer seats than their Shi’ite counterparts. Some Sunni insurgents and anti-government leaders also made it clear that they could both participate in many aspects of the political process and support the insurgency.

Nevertheless, a number of reports in early January 2006 indicated that enough progress was taking place so that US and Iraqi government officials were able to hold much more productive dialogues with groups the insurgency.

These talks involved Sunni Arab nationalists who resented the occupation and were fearful of being marginalized under a Shi’ite dominated government. Both sets of officials stressed that no commitments were made to this group, and that they would not enter into talks with foreign terrorists and pro-Saddam elements. Furthermore, officials were adamant that they would not talk with figures that the intelligence services identified as having been implicated in lethal attacks on US and Iraqi forces.

Though the identities of the insurgent groups and figures involved in the talks are unknown, the New York Times listed Muhammad’s Army and the Islamic Army in Iraq as the likely groups because they are allegedly nationalist and are comprised of former Ba’athists. Despite the talks, US officials did not believe that a lasting ceasefire or demobilization of insurgent bands was imminent largely because such groups wanted the US to establish a timeline for withdrawal. Nonetheless, Ambassador Khalilzad admitted in an interview in the spring of 2006 that US officials had held talks with some groups linked to the insurgency and that he believed these talks were one of the reasons that the number of attacks against US troops declined during that period.

The US effort to reach out to part of Sunni nationalist insurgency appears to have had two levels. On the political level, US officials hoped to bring the nationalist insurgents into the political process, which would encourage them to give up violence. On another level, the US appeared to want to turn the nationalists against the foreign fighters and Al Qa’ida affiliates by focusing on the differences between the insurgent groups.

As one Western diplomat stated, “According to Islamic doctrine, as well as democratic principles, there cannot be a legitimate resistance against a legitimate government. If we can reach an understanding with each other, meaning the resistance, as they call it, and the coalition, then they in turn will take care of Zarqawi and the terrorists.” In the talks, US representatives repeatedly asked the location of Al Qa’ida elements and whether the nationalist elements would be willing to help root them out.

Other US efforts had already been made public in December 2005. The US released 20 prominent Sunni detainees along with Satam Quaood, a former Saddam supporter. Though US Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad stressed that the move was not an attempt to mollify Sunni insurgents, they reportedly took the release as a sign of good will and became more open to talks. While such prisoner releases may inadvertently soften aspects of the Sunni insurgency, it provoked an outburst of protests by Shi’ites against Ambassador Khalilzad and Iraqi Sunni leaders.
A tape attributed to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi that was released on an Islamist website in early January seemed to be an apparent response to such efforts by Iraqi and US officials, as well as Arab states. Zarqawi sharply criticized Iraqi Sunnis and Arab countries for working for the formation of a unifying coalition government in Iraq.

The speaker attacked the Arab League summit in November that brought the various Iraqi factions together in Egypt. Reuters quoted the speaker as saying: “The countries that met in Cairo … were involved in destroying Iraq and cooperated with America by opening their land, air space and waters and offering intelligence to it.” The speaker explained that they had not attacked polling stations during the election so as not to hurt Sunnis while denouncing the Sunni Iraqi Islamist Party for supporting the Iraqi constitution.

This effort may have backfired to the point that it forced the Zarqawi group to change tactics. An announcement on a website frequently used by al-Qa’ida in early 2006 indicated that Zarqawi had abdicated his position as “emir” on the Mujahedeen Council, a group composed of six radical organizations in Iraq including al-Qa’ida, in favor of an Iraqi. In a video broadcast on the Internet, Zarqawi appealed to Muslim clerics in Iraq and asked for their support in his movement. Although this may be an attempt by Al-Qa’ida in Iraq to put an “Iraqi face” on what is seen by many as a foreign-led Islamist extremist movement, the levels of communication, cooperation and conflict between the various insurgent movements remains unclear.

The Iraqi government attempted to take advantage of this cleavage, reaching an agreement with six Sunni nationalist insurgent groups. In exchange for reconciliation talks, these groups pledged to denounce Zarqawi’s al-Qa’ida movement. Despite the scattered nature of the evidence indicating a split in insurgent movements, Iraqi National Security Advisor Mowaffak Rubaie indicated that he believed such incidents were on the rise and reflected an increasing intolerance among Iraqis of foreign-led groups operating in their country.

Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch, A US military spokesman in Baghdad echoed these sentiments and emphasized that six “major leaders” had been killed by other indigenous insurgent groups since September 2005, and suggested that the “local insurgents had become part of the solution.”

Other reports indicated that members of the Albu Mahal tribe, who had formerly clashed with Coalition forces, began directing US troops to locations of al-Qa’ida hideouts in the Syrian border area. In Ramadi, Abu Khatab, a high-ranking al-Qa’ida member, was run out by insurgents loyal to local tribes. In Samarra, local leaders launched a campaign to hunt down al-Qa’ida members in a response to the assassination of Hikmat Mumtaz, the leader of the Albu-Baz tribe.

It is important to note, however, that the shifts in Sunni “nationalist positions, and their infighting with Islamist extremists, did not have a discernable effect on the overall level of violence in Iraq. In a ten-day period in January, insurgents attacked US forces 113 times in Ramadi, the supposed primary area of this division among foreign and domestic led groups. Jeffrey White, a former US intelligence officer, suggested that, “even if we can exploit this rift” between insurgent groups, “it doesn’t mean they stop fighting us.”

Moreover, any splits between the insurgent groups are highly dependent on the actions of the Shi’ites and Kurds in the new government. Both Sunni insurgents, and Sunnis in general, have expressed growing fears of Shi’ite and Kurdish attacks and abuses since the summer of 2005.
They pointed to well-documented abuses by some of the Shi’ite-dominated units in the special security forces and in prisons controlled by the Ministry of Interior that became public in the fall and winter of 2005. They also charge that Shi’ite organizations like the Badr Organization have run the equivalent of death squads, that the Shi’ites are pushing Sunnis out of Basra and Shi’ite neighborhoods in other cities, and Kurdish groups are seeking to push Sunnis out of Kirkuk and other mixed cities and towns in the north.

**The Role of Sunni Arab Militias**

This pressure on Arab Sunnis from the Arab Shi’ites and Kurds sometimes helped fuel the insurgency, but it also led those Sunnis willing to cooperate with the Coalition and new Iraqi government to develop their own forces. These efforts have also been stimulated by the rising tensions between those Sunnis that do not want to participate in the insurgency and the insurgents, and between the more moderate and nationalist insurgents and the more extreme Islamist movements.

Most of the Sunni forces that emerged by early 2006 were local and informal, operating at the tribal and neighborhood level. In some cases, the end result was a force that was not loyal to either the insurgency or supportive of the Coalition and new Iraqi government. Some forces were part of the insurgency, and others were formed to deal with the threat posed by the more extreme Sunni Arab insurgents, such as the Zarqawi movement. Map VIII.1 below shows the tribal and subtribal divisions in Iraq.

According to the August 2006 DoD report on stability and security in Iraq, Sunni Arabs did not form organized militias. After the February mosque bombing in Samarra, Sunnis increasingly relied on neighborhood watches, insurgents, and al-Qa’ida in Iraq. The report expected support of extra-governmental security forces to continue until Sunni Iraqis felt that the police and army were no longer infiltrated by Shi’ite militias.1522

The DoD November Stability and Security update said of Sunni militias:1523

> Sunni Arabs do not have a formally organized, national level militia. Sunni, especially in heavily mixed areas like Baghdad, rely on neighborhood watches and other local armed elements to provide security in neighborhoods and areas where they perceive Iraqi institutions and forces are unwilling or unable to meet security requirements. Attacks on the Sunni population by Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM), and the presence of Badr Organization and JAM members in the Iraqi Police Service and the National Police, contribute to Sunni concerns about persecution. High levels of sectarian violence are driving some Sunni neighborhood watch organization in Baghdad to transform into militias with limited offensive capabilities.

The more realistic assessment by the Pentagon was the first that acknowledged the effect of Shi’ite militia infiltration into ISF on Sunnis.
Most Iraqis see loyalty more in terms of their own tribal and clan ties than in any political entity.

The power of tribal shaykhs, based in part on their control of tribal landholding, was weakened by the 1958 revolution and subsequent land reform. Greater government centralization has also undermined the economic base of the tribal system.

Saddam has worked to absorb tribal influence into his regime. Saddam initially tried to incorporate tribal culture within a new Iraqi identity that focused on the Ba'th Party. He also mobilized his own clan and family networks into Iraq's military and security services. Later, to address an unstable domestic security situation after the Gulf war, Saddam resurrected and co-opted tribal rule by giving rewards to and consulting with tribal leaders to ensure their support.
The Positive Side of the Militia Story

In some cases, the Coalition and new Iraqi government either helped create such militias or supported them. In the border area and part of Western Iraq, for example, MNF-I and the Iraqi government found it was cheaper and more effective to buy the loyalty of local tribal militias than fight the insurgents – particularly in those areas where outside insurgents had alienated the local residents. These developments led US Army Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch to go so far as to say that "The local insurgents have become part of the solution and not part of the problem."1524

The Iraqi Minister of Defense, Saadoun Dulaymi, encouraged these developments, and MNF-I provided funds, weapons, and some training. US officers and Ambassador Khalilzad met with key leaders. In some Sunni urban areas and towns, police forces were created that came close to being local militias, at least in terms of their recruiting base. In other areas, Sunnis were organized at the tribal or local level in an effort to protected key facilities and projects, like oil pipelines. These efforts were given further incentive when a bombing by Zarqawi forces killed some 70 Arab Sunnis at a recruiting station in Ramadi in January 2006.1525

Mithal Alusi, a Sunni Arab parliamentarian, was quoted as saying that, "There is a change...After these attacks, and after the elections, we find the people are eager to be rid of the terrorists." Sheikh Osama al-Jadaan, of the Karabila tribe in Anbar province was quoted as saying that, "They claim to be striking at the US occupation, but the reality is they are killing innocent Iraqis in the markets, in mosques, in churches, and in our schools," although he also noted that, “We are caught in the middle between the terrorists coming to destroy us with their suicide belts, their TNT, and their car bombs, and the American Army that destroys our homes, takes our weapons, and doesn't allow us to defend ourselves against the terrorists.”1526

These efforts continued in February.1527 Iraqi and US officials issued offers and discussed deals for prisoner release, additional aid, and senior positions in the army and police for the support of Sunni “nationalist insurgents.” These efforts included a meeting between General George W. Casey, Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, and high-ranking members of Iraq’s security and intelligence agencies with some Iraq’s largest Sunni Muslim Arab tribes.

Mowaffak Rubaie, the Iraqi government’s national security advisor, said that al-Jaafari promised to recruit more Sunni Arabs into the army and police forces and to send more economic aid to Al Anbar. Rubaie and Sunni tribal leaders at the meeting also said that al-Jaafari pledged to release at least 140 prisoners in coming weeks, and that more releases would be forthcoming.

It is far from clear what official agreement, if any, was reached between local and tribal leaders in Anbar Province and Iraqi and US officials regarding the recruitment of Sunni members into the army and police in return for their cooperation against Islamists. In May a small protest broke out during a graduation ceremony of nearly 1,000 new Iraqi Army soldiers, most of them Sunnis from Anbar. After learning that day that they would be assigned outside of their home towns such as Ramadi, dozens of the newly sworn in soldiers tore off their uniforms throwing them on the ground and yelling and shaking their fists toward the camera.1528

While this was hardly more than a small disturbance and was more for show than anything else, the decision by Iraqi military leaders to deploy the troops outside their province demonstrated that the US and Iraqi military officials were still hesitant to station an almost all Sunni battalion in their native province for fear they would join forces with local insurgents. Still, Iraqi Brig. Salah Khalil al-Ani, a mediator, indicated that the soldiers were under the impression they would
be assigned to the Anbar region because of an alleged agreement between tribal and religious leaders the Sunni province and Defense Ministry officers.1529

In any case, one recruit clearly relayed the reasons behind why it was important for the soldiers to serve in their home towns and provinces: “We had volunteered to serve our cities and communities, particularly our families in Ramadi and Fallujah, who have been mistreated by the present soldiers of the Iraqi army, who come in large part from Shiite areas.” Another recruit had a less altruistic, but no less rational, logic behind his decision: “We are afraid of the Shiite death squads which are found inside the Iraqi army, and who might kill us if we serve outside our province.”1530

The meetings also showed, however, that some tribal leaders wanted to create their own militias to police their cities – a move opposed by the central government. For example, Sheik Osama Jadan said his Al Anbar community had already formed an armed group, similar to the Shi’ite militias, to fight insurgents. "We started our operations three weeks ago, and they have been fruitful," he said. "We caught one of [guerrilla leader Abu Musab] Zarqawi’s assistants, and after an investigation of him … we handed him over to the Iraqi army and joint intelligence."

In Jubba, an area in the Sunni-dominated western Iraq near the Syrian border, Col. Shaaban Barzan al-Ubaidi, lead the nascent police force. His fiery determination to “wage jihad” against the “criminal, terrorist, Saddamist, [and] Zarqawist,” made him a US ally. Al-Ubaidi, who stated to have the support of 41 local sheikhs, said that he took up the job after more than 42 of his relatives were killed after trying to join the Iraqi army and police. Unlike others in his position who dislike both the insurgents and the Coalition, al-Ubaidi praises US efforts.1531

Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad explained that, "We are engaged with leaders, including tribal leaders and others, to encourage them to suspend their military operations with the aim of ending the insurgency and working together with us against the terrorists…I think it is critical that the security ministries be given to people who are broadly accepted across sectarian and ethnic lines and that they are not people who are sectarian or divisive and that they are not people with ties to militias or armed groups."

The Negative Side

At the same time, other Sunni voices gave a different message. Sheikh Abdel Salaam al-Qubaysi, a leader of the Muslim Scholars Association, a hard-line Sunni group with much of its base in Anbar stated that, "These are just a few sheikhs who want to get political power by claiming to be fighting the terrorists, and to be speaking for the resistance…They are slaves in the pockets of the occupation. They have no weight in the streets." He also blamed the attacks in Anbar on foreign Shi’ites, “We know that 40,000 militants from Iran have come to Iraq," he says. "I don't rule out that they did this to prevent Sunni Arabs from joining the Iraqi Army."1532

Some groups became involved in the equivalent of an auction between the Coalition and new Iraqi government and the insurgents. Some took the money and continued to support the insurgency. In a number of areas, however, the results were positive. Success varied by individual case.

What was more threatening was that some Sunni Arabs sought to form their own militia at the national level to counter Shi’ite and Kurdish forces. While some of these were informal “neighborhood watch” groups, others had full-time members and names for their organizations.

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In early February, a force called the "Anbar Revolutionaries" emerged which opposed the more extreme elements of the insurgency like Al Qa’ida, but also was created to help secure Arab Sunnis against Arab Shi’ite and Kurdish pressure and attacks. According to press reports, this force was composed largely of former Ba’ath loyalists, Saddam supporters, moderate Iraqi Sunni Islamists and other Arab Sunni nationalists. It was organized partly to resist pressure from Arab Sunni Islamist extremists, but its main purpose was to deal with the threat from the Shi’ite Badr Brigades.

One Sunni Arab official involved was quoted as saying that, "The Anbar Revolutionaries are here to stay, we need them to protect the people…Sunnis do not have the Shi’ite Badr (Brigades) or the Kurdish Peshmerga. In these times when sectarian tension is high, such a force is needed." Another was quoted as saying, "It is our right to defend ourselves."

Hazem Naimi, a political science professor, was quoted as saying that, "Tribal leaders and political figures found that al Qa’ida’s program is harming the political efforts and progress the Sunni political leaders are making, because al Qa’ida rejects all politics…Sunnis feel that the Shi’ites have taken over the government and now it is their state…The Badr Brigades are in the interior ministry and under the interior ministry's name they go to towns, kill and arrest."

As soft sectarian cleansing and abductions increased in mixed neighborhoods, some Sunnis began forming their own militias rather than leave their homes. Sunni mosques served as places for meeting and organization, as well as inspiration, for such groups. Preachers issued fatwas instructing their members to purchase guns and form a collective defense against further acts of violence by Shi’ites. Fares Mahmoud, deputy preacher of the El Koudiri Mosque said, “We’ve made an agreement with the neighbors that if we have another attack, they’ll pick up their weapons and fight the invaders.”

He continued, “We are depending on the soul of the people to protect us.”

Although at the time it was difficult to predict the future potential for Sunni militias, the feeling among Sunnis that their hand was being forced despite their best wishes, parallels many of the comments made by Shi’ite leaders and militias prior to the Askariya bombing. As Ismael Zayer, editor for the Iraqi newspaper Al Sabah Al Jadid said, “At the end of the day, if nobody will protect them and the government won’t intervene, then they have to protect themselves.” Adnan Abbas Allawi, a middle-aged manager echoed these feelings, “This decision was forced on us. We don’t want to do this, but it’s not possible to see our mosques burned and insulted. Patience has its limits.”

Although the exact events were unclear, it appeared that in April a two-day gun battle in the Azamiyah district, a Sunni neighborhood near Baghdad, was the result of a local Sunni militia attempting to repel what it thought were Shi’ite “death squads.” US officials countered however, that Coalition forces and the Iraqi Army were on patrol when they received fire from insurgents. Later a joint US-Iraqi checkpoint again took fire, at which point reinforcements were called in. Although the residents may have mistaken US and Iraqi Army patrols for the Shi’ite dominated police, it nonetheless demonstrated that localized Sunni militias were capable and willing to mount a coordinated defense. Moreover, it was a testament to the increasingly polarized divisions between the security forces and the overall relationships between Iraqi Sunnis and Shi’ites.
According to reports, in the early morning mosques in the Azamiyah area began calling “Allah Akbar” and “Go for Jihad! Defeat the aggressors,” signaling that the neighborhood was under attack. Residents said that the neighborhood security force that had formed in the aftermath of the February 22 Askariya bombing to protect their families and homes from Shi’ite militias, took up positions on rooftops and began firing at military vehicles. Other men went house-to-house urging able males to join the fight. “We defended our neighborhood, our mosques and our honor,” said one man who was part of the battle.\(^{1535}\)

Word spread throughout the town that the incoming men were “Iranians;” a slang term meaning that they were part of the Shi’ite groups that fled to Iran during Saddam’s rule, and then returned after his fall in 2003.\(^{1536}\) Both the Badr Organization and the Mahdi Army are said to have ties to Iran.

There were unconfirmed reports by some witnesses that the Iraqi Army, which has a larger Sunni representation than other security forces, fought with the residents against the Shi’ite-dominated police forces of the Interior Ministry. One woman remarked that the local “heroes of Adhamiyah” were rallying the townspeople to “teach [the Iranians] a lesson” and urged them to “support the Iraqi Army.”\(^{1537}\)

Regardless of whether Shi’ite militias, security forces, or the Iraqi army were the ones entering the town, the perception in the larger Sunni community was that it was another example of Shi’ite death squads tied to the government conducting sectarian cleansing, and their outrage was expressed accordingly.

“We have evidence that some officials and militias are up to their necks in the killings and kidnappings that take place daily in Baghdad,” said Sunni politician Dhafi al-Ani. Well known Sunni politician Adnan al-Dulaimi echoed these sentiments and accused the government of waging “the ugliest form of ethnic cleansing,” against the Sunni communities and blamed “the existence of unleashed militia, including some militia backed by foreign powers who have only one goal that is to see Iraqis slaughtered in a sectarian war.” Saleh al-Mutlaq, a possible candidate for a high level ministerial post and the leader of the Iraqi Front for National Dialogue, demanded that government police forces “stop their raiding, kidnapping and looting.”\(^{1538}\)

The following day, al-Qa’ida in Iraq issued a statement promising “a new raid to avenge the Sunnis at Adhamiyah and the other areas, and the raid will start with the dawn of Wednesday, if God wishes…The Shiite areas will be an open battlefield for us.”\(^{1539}\)

The al-Jaafari government said that terrorist groups masked as security and police forces that had moved in the area instigated the violence. Specifically, the Shi’ite dominated government accused the Islamic Army of Iraq, the 1920 Revolution Brigades and al-Qa’ida of intentionally trying to “destabilize the city because of its political, demographic and media importance.” The statement by al-Jafaari’s office continued, “They launched ugly rumors that they belong to the Interior Ministry commando force. These armed groups started to shoot at an Iraqi army camp in two assaults.”\(^{1540}\)

With such a wide variety of accounts of the same events, it was impossible to prove or disprove the version put forth by the Iraqi government. However, in the past, the MOI and the government in general have frequently deflected accusations of atrocities by Shi’ite “death squads” by claiming that it was the work of insurgents purporting to be Iraqi security forces. While it would make sense for Islamist insurgents, seeking to foment a civil war, to utilize this tactic, there
seemed to be scant evidence to support this claim. To the contrary, the incorporation of Shi’ite militias into the security forces, and the frequency of mystery abductions and body dumps, especially since the February bombing of the Shi’ite shrine, were all well documented.

While it was unclear if these Sunni “neighborhood watch” groups would cooperate or support the “Ba’athist,” “nationalist” or “Islamist” elements of the insurgency, reporting of the events portrayed the acts by the “Adhamiya Defense Committees” as a legitimate act of self defense, rather than an insurgent attack on US and Iraqi forces. For example, the Iraqi newspaper al-Zaman asserted that the “people of Adhamiya had foiled a night assault” by Shi’ite “death squads.”

It is clear that Sunni participation in the government, Iraqi forces, and the role of the Sunni militia(s) is dependent on the ability of the new Iraqi government to reassure Sunnis about their day-to-day security. It is also dependent on the governments ability to compromise with Sunni’s on issues like the control of oil and other revenues, the nature of central versus local power, the nature of any federation, allowing Ba’ath leaders to return to the government, the role of religion in law and governance, and the other key aspects that will shape Iraq’s character as a state.

It is also clear that further purges of Sunnis from the government, military, and security services can only make things worse. Such mistakes are exemplified by the implementation without warning of a six-month-old order from the Iraqi Deba’athification Commission that led to the dismissal of 18 Iraqi generals, colonels, and majors -- most Sunni Arabs from Anbar.

These worries were reflected in the May 2006 “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq,” report to Congress which noted that:

“Shi’a militias, and to a lesser extend the Peshmerga, are a significant point of contention with Sunni leaders, who use their existence as justification to form Sunni militia elements. Although no large Sunni militia units have formed, in some neighborhoods Sunnis are banding together to form their own security units because of real or perceived Shi’a threats and mistrust of Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces.”
XI. Assessing the Future Potential of the Sunni Insurgency

The future of the Sunni insurgency now seems dependent on two factors. First, whether the Iraqi political process succeeds in becoming truly inclusive or whether it heightens the sectarian and ethnic tensions and conflicts that divide Iraq and creates a more intense state of civil war. Second, how soon and how well the full range of Iraqi security forces can come on-line and be effective.

Failure in both areas is quite clearly an option. The odds of Iraq drifting into a serious civil war are impossible to quantify but the risk is clearly serious. At the same time, the insurgency may well divide between its more secular or “nationalist” elements and the Islamist extremist groups.

The “Nationalist” Need for Compromise

Given their present strength, the more nationalistic Sunni insurgents have good reason to seek a political compromise if the Shi’ites and Kurds offer them an inclusive government and acceptable terms. They at best seem capable of paralyzing progress, and fighting a long war of attrition, rather than defeating an Iraqi government which is dominated by a cohesive Shi’ite majority, and which maintains good relations with the Kurds.

Regardless of who is doing the counting, the total for active and passive native Iraqi Sunni insurgents still leaves them a small minority of Iraq's population. Unless the Iraqi government divides or collapses, they cannot bring back Arab Sunni minority rule or the Ba’ath; they cannot regain the level of power, wealth, and influence they once had. They cannot reestablish the form of largely secular rule that existed under Saddam, or reestablish Iraq as a country that most Arabs see as “Sunni.”

An understanding of these same political and military realities may eventually drive most of the more moderate and pragmatic Sunni insurgents to join the non-violent political process in Iraq if the Shi’ite and Kurds elements that now dominate the government and political process act to include them and provide suitable incentives.

Such shifts, however, are likely to be slow and uncertain. Historically, most insurgent groups have a much better vision of what they oppose than what they are for, and they have limited interest in pragmatic realpolitik. Most Sunni groups are still committed to doing everything -- and sometimes anything -- they can to drive the Coalition out and break up the peaceful political process almost regardless of the damage done to Iraq and to Sunni areas.

Richard Armitage, the former US Deputy Secretary of State, commented on the insurgency and its lack of realistic political goals as follows: “In Algeria, the so-called insurgents, or in Vietnam, the so-called insurgents, they had … a program and a positive view…In Iraq that’s lacking … they only have fear to offer. They only have terror to offer. This is why they’re so brutal in their intimidation.”

The “Islamist” Need for Civil War

The risk also exists that the Sunni Islamist extremists have become better trained and organized to the point where they are now able to establish themselves as the dominant political and military force within the Sunni community—particularly if Iraq’s Arab Shi’ites and Kurds mishandle the situation or react to the growing provocation of bloody suicide attacks and other killings by Neo-Salafi extremists.
The Sunni Islamist extremists can then try to present themselves as the only legitimate alternative to the occupation, even if they fail to provide a popular agenda. This means they can survive and endure as long as the government is too weak to occupy the insurgency dominated areas, and as long as the large majority of Sunnis in given areas does not see a clear incentive to join the government and Iraq's political process.

Much will depend on just how willing Iraqi Shi’ites and Kurds are to forget the past, not overreact to Sunni Islamist and other attacks designed to divide and splinter the country, and continue to offer Iraqi Sunnis a fair share of wealth and power. The US position is clear. The US consistently supported a unified nation and inclusive government. US Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, stated in an interview that the Ministries of Defense and Interior must be headed by those who have broad based support: “The security ministries have to be run by people who are not associated with militias and who are not regarded as sectarian.” Later, Ambassador Khalilzad went further and directly tied the future of US economic and military support to the ability of Iraqi leaders to form an inclusive government saying, “We [the U.S.] are not going to invest the resources of the American people and build forces that are run by people who are sectarian.”
XII. The Issue of Foreign Volunteers

The fact that young men are being recruited from countries in North Africa, the Sudan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and other countries does not mean that foreign fighters dominate Iraqi Islamist extremist organizations. Recruiting smaller numbers of outsiders as cannon fodder, sacrifice pawns, or "martyrs" has become all too easy in a region where religious extremists have learned how to exploit religious feelings. This does not, however, mean that those directing the efforts of such groups, carrying out the support activity, or doing much of the day-to-day fighting are foreign fighters.

There is limited evidence that Iraq is a unique magnet for foreign volunteers. Iraq is scarcely the only center of such activity, and foreign volunteers also operate in the West, in North Africa and the Levant, in the Gulf, and Central, South, and Southeast Asia. Nations as diverse as Afghanistan, Chechnya, Indonesia, Yemen, Algeria, Egypt, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the Philippines, and the Sudan also have training centers, staging and support facilities, or internal conflicts involving neo-Salafi extremists. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict does as much to fuel Arab and Islamic anger as the Iraq conflict, and such extremists capitalize on political, economic, and social problems and tensions throughout the Arab and Islamic worlds.

Nevertheless, Iraq has become a critical center for Sunni Islamist extremist activity, and currently presents the greatest threat that such extremists could destabilize a state, and drive it towards a major civil war. They have at least partially displaced the struggle between Iraqis, and they certainly drive it towards violence and away from political competition and accommodation. They are fighting a war to create a civil war in Iraq: one that would make an effective secular or moderate government impossible and trigger a conflict between Sunni and Shi’ite that could spread to divide Islam and the Arab world. More broadly, they seek to make Islam a captive to a kind of violent, intolerant, and ruthlessly exclusive ideological movement that would deprive it of a future by driving it back towards an imaginary and perverted vision of the past.

In June 2005, US Lt-Gen John Vines, commanding general of coalition forces in Iraq, identified the foreign fighters as the most violent group in Iraq’s ongoing insurgency. According to Vines, insurgent activity among Iraqis was being driven by money, not ideology, and foreign jihadists were using their financial resources to get Iraqis to attack other Iraqis.

It is unlikely, however, that foreign volunteers make up even 10% of the insurgent force, and they may make up Less than 5%. While the number of foreign volunteers increased through the spring of 2005, US experts feel they have since declined, largely as a result of US and Iraqi government military operations in Western Iraq and improvements in security in the Syrian-Iraqi border area. While some estimates of the total number of such volunteers have gone as high as 3,000, others go from the high hundreds to over 1,000. The fact is that there is no basis for even a credible guessestimate, and the numbers keep fluctuating over time.

The Uncertain Number, Source, and Role of Foreign Volunteers

Foreigners made up less than 600 out of some 14,000 detainees as of June 2005. Coalition experts estimated that they had made up less than 5% of insurgent casualties and detainees to date. US experts and top level Iraqi officials estimated in November 2005 that at least 90% of the Sunni fighters were Iraqi and the total might be closer to 94% to 96%. Coalition sources
reported that only 3.8% of some 13,300 detainees held in November 2005 were foreign. These percentages of foreigners were lower than estimates made in the early winter of 2005, and marked a sharp contrast to claims that the insurgency was being driven by large numbers of foreign volunteers. The percentage had not changed significantly as of March 2006, when the total number of detainees was reported as approaching 14,000.

The reliance given insurgent organizations place on foreign volunteers is uncertain. While Al Qa’ida in Mesopotamia has become virtually synonymous with foreign volunteers, its membership may well be largely Iraqi. US authorities believed Zarqawi commanded as many as 1,000 fighters and a much larger group of sympathizers, as of November 2005, but did not believe foreign volunteers came close to being a majority.1552 The US-Iraqi operations in Tal Afar focused on attacking Al Qa’ida in Mesopotamia in September 2005. Although this operation led to the capture of 1,000 suspected insurgents, none proved to be foreigners.1553

There also are foreign volunteers in other Sunni Islamist extremist groups like Ansar al-Islam (also known as Ansar al-Sunnah), and the Islamic Army of Iraq. At least six other smaller terrorist groups are operating in Iraq that may rely on foreign volunteers, and many of the groups supporting the "Ba’ath" seem to have foreign volunteers as well.

Intelligence analysis – corroborated by information from Internet chat rooms and web sites run by Islamists – indicates that such groups have established terrorist training camps for both foreign volunteers and Iraqi volunteers in the mountains of northern Iraq and in the country's western desert along its 450-mile border with Syria. There are also reports of staging facilities and indoctrination centers inside of Syria.

In any case, foreign volunteers have had a special impact on the insurgency because they have been used in extreme attacks to try to provoke a civil war between Iraq's Arab Sunnis and its Arab Shi'ites, Kurds, and other minorities. Foreign Sunni Islamist extremist volunteers do seem to have carried out most of the suicide car and pedestrian bombings since 2003. These are among some of the bloodiest and most-publicized insurgent attacks.

One US defense official estimated that as of July 2005, Iraqis had directly carried out less than 10% of more than 500 suicide bombings.1554 Other experts put the number at well above 30%. What is clear is that the number of such attacks accelerated sharply in the spring and summer of 2005; the Associated Press counted at least 213 suicide attacks as of July.

US Air Force General, and MNF-I spokesperson, Don Alston stated, “The foreign fighters are the ones most often behind the wheel of suicide car bombs, or most often behind any suicide situation,” and Gen. Abizaid stated that the Coalition had seen a rise in suicide bombers coming from North Africa; particularly Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco.1555 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Peter Pace, agreed adding that foreign fighters present a “larger challenge” to the security of the country than Iraqi insurgent groups.1556

In the first major announcement from insurgents in Iraq on their losses, al-Qa’ida in Iraq leader Abu Ayyub al-Masri, widely believed to have replaced Zarqawi, said in an audio message that more than 4,000 foreign insurgent fighters had been killed in Iraq since the US-led invasion in 2003. The voice of the new leader could not be independently identified, but the figure helped put the role of foreign insurgent fighters in perspective.1557
**Number and National Origin of Foreign Volunteers**

No one knows where most of the foreign volunteers present in Iraq at any given time have come from. The mix seems to vary constantly, and estimates differ from source to source. For example, the US military reported that 375 foreigners so far had been detained in Iraq in 2005 as of late October. The percentage of foreign detainees was only a little over 4% in early 2005, and had actually dropped by the end of 2005. Among those detained were: 78 Egyptians; 66 Syrians; 41 Sudanese; 32 Saudis; 17 Jordanians; 13 Iranians; 2 Britons; and one each from France, Israel, Ireland and the United States.\(^{1558}\)

Reuvan Paz, a respected Israeli analyst attempted to calculate the composition of foreign volunteers in Jihadi-Salafi insurgent groups by examining the national origin of 154 insurgents killed in the fighting from the battle of Fallujah through March 2005. He estimated that 94 (61%) were Saudi, 16 (10.4%) were Syrian, 13% (8.4%) were Iraqi, 11 (7.1%) were Kuwaiti, 4 came from Jordan, 3 from Lebanon, 2 from Libya, 2 from Algeria, 2 from Morocco, 2 from Yemen, 2 from Tunisia, 1 from Palestine, 1 from Dubai, and one from the Sudan. He estimated that 33 of the 154 were killed in suicide attacks: 23 Saudis, 5 Syrian, 2 Kuwaiti, 1 Libyan, 1 Iraqi, and 1 Morrocan. These figures are drawn from a very small sample, and are highly uncertain, but they do illustrate the diversity of backgrounds.\(^{1559}\)

The Saudi National Security Assessment Project estimated that there were approximately 3,000 foreign fighters in Iraq in the spring of 2005 (See Figure X.1). These figures, and a breakdown by nationality, were rounded “best estimates,” based on reports of Saudi and other intelligence services. They drew upon the interrogations of hundreds of captured militants and a comprehensive analysis of militant activities. This included interviews and analysis of activities by both Saudi and non-Saudi militants. Intelligence reports prepared by regional governments were also consulted, which provided not only names of militants, but also valuable information on the networks that they relied upon to enter Iraq and conduct their activities.

The conclusion of the Saudi investigation was that the number of Saudi volunteers in August 2005 was around 12% of the foreign contingent (approximately 350), or 1.2% of the total insurgency of approximately 30,000. Algerians constitute the largest contingent at 20%, followed closely by Syrians (18%), Yemenis (17%), Sudanese (15%), Egyptians (13%) and those from other states (5%). Discussions with US and Iraqi experts indicated that they felt that Saudi estimates were roughly correct, although they cautioned that they did not have reliable numbers for either the total number of volunteers or their origin by country. A Brookings Institution’s analysis of the numbers of foreign fighters in Iraq and their countries of origin concurred with the Saudi assessment.\(^{1560}\)

Anything like 3,000 foreign fighters in Iraq would pose a serious threat, but the numbers would be largely irrelevant. All it would take is enough volunteers to continue to support suicide attacks and violent bombings, and seek to drive Iraqi Sunnis towards a major and intense civil war. They also pose a threat because their actions gave Bin Laden and other neo-Salafi extremist movements publicity and credibility among the angry and alienated in the Islamic world, and because many were likely to survive and be the source of violence and extremism in other countries.

Nevertheless, even the highest estimate of foreign volunteers pales beside the estimates of Iraqi insurgents. US experts still put the total number of full time insurgents at around 20,000-30,000
in December 2005. Virtually all reports indicate the insurgency remained largely homegrown. Moreover, if the number of foreign detainees is any measure of how important foreign militants are, it indicates that it is their fanaticism and willingness to use extreme violence that is the key issue.

Much of the flow of people and supplies across Iraq’s borders is a factor of general border permeability. No country on Iraq’s borders prevents all forms of infiltration. Anyone with a convincing set of papers can cross at legal border crossings, and minor bribes are often enough to gain permission to enter. Smuggling and “fees” simply to jump the inspection line are common, and inspection is often minimal.

Jordan does offer some security along its border, although it is scarcely “sealed.” The same is true of Turkey. The Saudi government had some success in its efforts to seal the border between the Kingdom and Iraq. However, it admits that traffic still crosses the border in both directions, with Iraqi smugglers going into Saudi Arabia and some infiltrators moving in the opposite direction. Iran now has a flood of pilgrims entering Iraq, border checks are often inadequate., Neither Iran nor Iraq could totally halt smuggling and infiltration even during the worst days of the Iran-Iraq War.

In a press briefing on September 20, 2006 Maj. Gen. William B. Caldwell IV, spokesman for MNF-Iraq, reported that from the beginning of 2005 to that date in 2006, 630 foreign fighters had been captured from over 25 different countries, with the most prevalent being Egyptians, Syrians, Sudanese, and Saudi nationals. He also said that there were 370 foreign fighters in captivity. During July 2006 there were 70 foreign fighters killed or captured and 40 in August.1561

US and Iraqi joint raids continued to find foreign fighters. The Iraqi Army arrested 34 people in Baquba on November 8 for violent acts, including five Egyptians and five Sudanese.1562 In a November 19 Press Briefing, Gen. Caldwell said that on average 50-70 foreign fighters were crossing the Syrian border a month. He also said that Iraqi security forces and coalition forces had killed about 425 fighters in 2006 and captured 670 – through November 10. Roughly 20% of the foreign fighters came from Syria, 20% came from Egypt, 12% came from Saudi Arabia, and 13% came from Sudan.1563

General Abizaid, Commander of USCENTCOM, maintained that the most foreign fighters flowed to Iraq and Iraq remained the hotbed for al-Qa’ida activity.1564 Gen. Michael Hayden, Director of the CIA, told the Senate Armed Services Committee that only a “small fraction” of those killed in Iraq were foreign fighters. He estimated that the figure was slightly greater than 3% and that Iraqis themselves were perpetrating the rest of the violence in Iraq. Gen. Hayden stated that the overall number of foreign fighters in Iraq was 1,300.1565
Figure X.1: Foreign Militants in Iraq

(3,000 Total)

- Egypt 13%
- Saudi Arabia 12%
- Syria 18%
- Sudan 15%
- Yemen 17%
- Algeria 20%
- Other Countries 5%
Saudi Militants in Iraq: A Case Study

The Coalition and Iraqi government have not released any significant details on their estimates of
the number of foreign volunteers, their origin, or their motives. The Saudi intelligence services
have, however, made a major effort to estimate the number of Saudi infiltrators that move across
the Saudi border – or far more often transit through third states like Syria.

As of August 2005, approximately 352 Saudis were thought to have successful entered Iraq (and
an additional 63 had been stopped at the border by Saudi security services). Of these, 150 were
thought to be active, 72 were known from al-Qa’ida compiled lists to be active in Iraq. 74
were presumed in detention (a maximum of 20 in US custody and 3 in Kurdish), and 56 were
presumed dead (See Figure VI.2).

Interrogations and other Saudi intelligence gathering operations revealed that these individuals
did not come exclusively from a single geographical region in Saudi Arabia, but from various
areas in the Kingdom, especially from the South, Hijaz, and Najd. They were usually affiliated
with the most prominent conservative tribes and were generally middle class. Most were
employed, many were educated, and all were Sunni.

As part of a massive crackdown on Saudi militants attempting to enter Iraq, the Saudi
government has interrogated dozens of nationals either returning from Iraq or caught at the
border. The average age of these fighters was 17-25, but a few were older. Some had families
and young children. In contrast, other fighters from across the Middle East and North Africa
tended to be in their late 20s or 30s.

The Saudi infiltrators were also questioned by the intelligence services about their motives for
joining the insurgency. One important point was the number who insisted that they were not
militants before the Iraq war. Of those who were interrogated, a full 85% were not on any
government watch list (which comprised most of the recognized extremists and militants), nor
were they known members of al-Qa’ida.
The names of those who died fighting in Iraq generally appear on militant websites as martyrs, and Saudi investigators also approached the families of these individuals for information regarding the background and motivation of the ones who died. According to these interviews as well, the bulk of the Saudi fighters in Iraq were driven to extremism by the war itself.

Most of the Saudi militants in Iraq were motivated by revulsion at the idea of an Arab land being occupied by a non-Arab country. These feelings were intensified by the images of the occupation they saw on television and the Internet – many of which came from sources intensely hostile to the US and the war in Iraq, and which repeated or manipulated “worst case” images.

The catalyst most often cited was Abu Ghraib, though images from Guantanamo Bay were mentioned. Some recognized the name of a relative or friend posted on a website and felt compelled to join the cause. These factors, combined with the agitation regularly provided by militant clerics in Friday prayers, helped lead them to volunteer.

In one case, a 24-year-old student from a prominent Saudi tribe -- who had no previous affiliation with militants -- explained that he was motivated after the US invasion to join the militants by stories he saw in the press, and through the forceful rhetoric of a mid-level cleric sympathetic to al-Qa’ida. The cleric introduced him and three others to a Yemeni, who unbeknownst to them was an al-Qa’ida member.

After undergoing several weeks of indoctrination, the group made its way to Syria, and then was escorted across the border to Iraq where they met their Iraqi handlers. There they were assigned to a battalion, comprised mostly of Saudis (though those planning the attacks were exclusively Iraqi). After being appointed to carry out a suicide attack, the young man had second thoughts and returned home to Saudi Arabia where he was arrested in January 2004. The cleric who had instigated the whole affair was also brought up on terrorism charges and is expected to face a long jail term. The Yemeni al-Qa’ida member was killed in December 2004 following a failed attack on the Ministry of Interior.

There are other similar stories regarding young men who were enticed by rogue clerics into taking up arms in Iraq. Many were instructed to engage in suicide attacks and as a result, never return home. Interrogations of nearly 150 Saudis suspected of planning to the join the Iraqi insurgency indicate that they were heeding the calls of clerics and activists to “drive the infidels out of Arab land.”

Like Jordan and most Arab countries, the Saudi government has sought to limit such calls for action, which inevitably feed neo-Salafi extremism as the expense of legitimate interpretations of Islam. King Abdullah has issued a strong new directive that holds those who conceal knowledge of terrorist activities as guilty as the terrorists themselves. However, many religious leaders and figures in Arab nations have issued fatwas stating that waging jihad in Iraq is justified by the Koran due to its “defensive” nature. To illustrate, in October 2004, several clerics in Saudi Arabia said that, “it was the duty of every Muslim to go and fight in Iraq.”

On June 20, 2005, the Saudi government released a new list of 36 known al-Qa’ida operatives in the Kingdom (all but one of those released on previous lists had been killed by Saudi security forces, so these individuals represented the foot soldiers of al-Qa’ida, and they were considered far less dangerous). After a major crackdown in the Kingdom, as many as 21 of these low-level al-Qa’ida members fled to Iraq.
Interior Minister Prince Nayef commented that when they return, they could be even “tougher” than those who fought in Afghanistan. “We expect the worse from those who went to Iraq,” he said. “They will be worse and we will be ready for them.” According to Prince Turki al-Faisal, the former Saudi Intelligence Chief and the new Ambassador to the US, approximately 150 Saudis are currently operating in Iraq.\textsuperscript{1569}

In mid-November 2005, Iraq’s national security adviser, Mowaffaq al-Rubaie told reporters that most of the suicide bombers in Iraq were Saudi citizens:

We do not have the least doubt that nine out of 10 of the suicide bombers who carry out suicide bombing operations among Iraqi citizens...are Arabs who have crossed the border with Syria.

Most of those that blow themselves up in Iraq are Saudi nationals.

But al-Rubaie’s comments appeared to conflict with findings released the previous month by Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch who said some 312 foreign nationals, including 32 Saudis, had been captured while taking part in the insurgency since April. With 78 and 66 respectively, two countries-Egypt and Syria-made up the largest foreign contingents, accounting for almost half of all captured foreign insurgents.\textsuperscript{1570}

Unlike the foreign fighters from poor countries such as Yemen and Egypt, Saudis entering Iraq often brought in money to support the cause, arriving with personal funds between $10,000-$15,000. Saudis are the most sought after militants; not only because of their cash contributions, but also because of the media attention their deaths as “martyrs” bring to the cause. This is a powerful recruiting tool. Because of the wealth of Saudi Arabia, and its well-developed press, there also tends to be much more coverage of Saudi deaths in Iraq than of those from poorer countries.

In contrast, if an Algerian or Egyptian militant dies in Iraq, it is unlikely that anyone in his home country will ever know. For instance, interrogations revealed that when an Algerian conducts a suicide bombing, the insurgency rarely has a means of contacting their next of kin. Saudis, however, always provide a contact number and a well-developed system is in place for recording and disseminating any “martyrdom operations” by Saudis.

**Syria and Foreign Volunteers**

Syria’s role in the Iraqi insurgency has been a key problem. It has allowed Iraqi insurgent groups to operate and stage in Syria, with the clear tolerance of Syrian intelligence and security officials. Insurgent safe houses, small training and indoctrination facilities, and funding raising activities have existed long enough to make it clear that Syria is at best deliberately turning a blind eye, and border controls have been loose and erratic.

Such tolerance can be important even when it does little more than allow volunteers to be “trained” in Syria for a few weeks. Many insurgents required only the most minimal training. Wearing a suicide vest or driving a suicide VBIED does not take skill, it takes motivation. Being able to indoctrinate young men or women intensively in a closed facility is often the key to providing that motivation. Debriefs of infiltrators indicated it worked best if new recruits are secure and do not mix with actual insurgents while they are being indoctrinated.

Iraqi, Jordanian, Saudi, and US officials have all repeatedly identified Syria as a serious problem. An April 2003 report by Italian investigators described Syria as a “hub” for the relocation of Zarqawi’s group to Iraq. According to the report, “transcripts of wiretapped conversations among
the arrested suspects and others paint a detailed picture of overseers in Syria coordinating the movement of recruits and money between Europe and Iraq. Large numbers of former Ba‘athists and supporters of more nationalist insurgent groups also operate in the country.

Syria has shown in the past that it can crackdown on such insurgent activities and infiltration when it wants to -- usually when it has come under intensive pressure from the US or its neighbors. Preventing militants from crossing its 380-mile border with Iraq does, however, present problems even for a regime as notoriously security conscious and repressive as Syria. Even if Syria had the political will to completely and forcefully seal its border, it may lack sufficient resources to fund such an effort (Saudi Arabia has spent over $1.2 billion in the past two years alone to Secure its border).

Syria has, however, had considerable success simply by heavily screening those who enter the country. This method does present problems in establishing proof of residency in Syria as well as the difficulties with verifying hotel reservations. According to the Minister of Tourism, roughly 3.1 million tourists visited the country in 2004; the number of Saudis alone that arrived in the first seven months of 2005 increased to 270,000 from 230,000 in the same period in 2004.

Syria does seem to be able to act when it wants to. There are even those who claim the Syrian authorities are being too forceful in their crackdown on foreigners in the country. There have been reports that Syria has engaged in the systematic abuse, beating and robbery of Saudi tourists, a charge that Syria denies. According to semi-official reports published in al-Watan, released prisoners alleged that Syrian authorities arbitrarily arrested Saudis on the grounds that they were attempting to infiltrate Iraq to carry out terrorist attacks.

The former detainees maintained that they were “targeted for arrest in Syria without any charges.” They went on to say that, “if they had intended to sneak into Iraq, Saudi authorities would have kept them in custody when they were handed over to that country.” According to the Syrian Minister of Tourism, Saadallah Agha Kalaa, “no Saudi tourists have been harassed in Syria...Those who are spreading these rumors are seeking to harm Syria, which is a safe tourist destination.” In the murky world of the Syrian security services, it is difficult to discern the truth. Suffice it to say that the problem of successfully halting the traffic of Saudis through Syria into Iraq is overwhelmingly difficult, politically charged, and operationally challenging.

There is no visa requirement for Arabs from some countries to enter Syria. Syria does, however, maintain a database of suspected militants, and several dozen Saudis have been arrested at the border. However, pressuring the Syrians additionally to tighten security could be both unrealistic and politically sensitive.

As for the movement of fighters out of Syria, most militants leaving Syria to enter Iraq have done so at a point just south of the mountainous Kurdish areas of the north, which is sparsely inhabited by nomadic Sunni Arab tribes, or due east from Dair al-Zawr into Iraq’s Anbar province. Crossing near the southern portion of the border, which is mainly desert and is heavily occupied by Syrian and US forces, is seldom done.

The crossing from Dair Al-Zawr province was the preferred route through the summer of 2005 because the majority of the inhabitants on both sides of the border were sympathetic to the insurgency, the scattering of villages along the border provides ample opportunity for covert movement, and constant insurgent attacks in the area are thought to keep the US forces otherwise
occupied. According to intelligence estimates, the key transit point here – for both Saudis and other Arabs – is the Bab al-Waleed crossing.

In a March 2006 Senate hearing, Gen. John Abizaid assessed that it was Syrian national security and concerns for its own internal stability that were causing it to tighten its borders. Gen. Abizaid acknowledged Syrian efforts saying, “...the flow of foreign fighters across the Syrian border has decreased, and that’s clear from our intelligence...we know that the Syrians have moved against the foreign fighters.” He continued by asserting that the Syrian’s reaction was one of “self-interest” and that the decrease in fighters coming across the border was because the Syrian government viewed them as posing “a threat to Syria, and they certainly don’t want to have these organizations and groups operating within their own country that are ultimately going to be a threat to their own government.”1573

**Iran and Foreign Volunteers**

Iraq also shares a long and relatively unguarded border with Iran, a non-Sunni non-Arab country. Few Saudi and other Sunni extremists seem to use it as a point of entry. Saudi authorities have, however, captured a handful of militants who have gone through Iran and four were apprehended after passing from Iran to the United Arab Emirates.

Iran is also a major source of funding and logistics for militant Shi’ite groups in Iraq, mainly SCIRI. According to regional intelligence reports, Iran is suspected of arming and training some 40,000 Iraqi fighters with a goal of fomenting an Islamic revolution in Iraq. While most of these Iraqi Shi’ites are former prisoners of war captured during the Iran-Iraq war, there were also reports of young Iraqi’s being recruited by Shi’ite clerics to go into Iran for religious and political indoctrination and militia training.1574

Britain has reported that Iran has supplied insurgents with more modern triggering devices and other forms of assistance to help make better, more lethal IEDs. This aid seems to be going to both some Sunni insurgent groups and Shi’ite anti-British hardliners in the Basra area.
XIII. The Uncertain Status of the Shi'ites

While domestic and foreign Sunni Islamists now dominate the insurgency, if the conflict escalates to a major civil war, it will almost certainly include far more fighters and movements from other ethnic and sectarian groups. As the previous chapters have shown, the tensions between religious Iraqi Arab Shi'ites and Sunni Islamist extremist groups are particularly dangerous and there are growing indicators that Shi'ites are taking revenge for Sunni insurgent attacks.

A major civil war in Iraq still seems avoidable, but the risk is all too real and Iraq faces major political and security challenges that virtually ensure this risk will be serious for at least the next year. It is also much more likely that Shi’ite movements will become involved in civil conflict than turn against the Coalition. Iraqi Arab Shi’ites resent the US presence, but most seem to realize that the fact that they are 60% of the population will give them political dominance if Iraq is secure enough so that its new political system divides up power according to the size of given factions.

The good news is that past public opinion polls have shown that most Arab Shi’ites, like Arab Sunnis, favor a unified Iraq and a strong central government. Such polls also have shown that Iraqi Shi’ites tend to be more religious in terms of support for an “Islamic state” in Iraq than Sunnis. However, the differences are limited and leading Iraqi clerics have not supported anything approaching Iran’s concept of a supreme leader, and key figures like the Grand Ayatollah Sistani have strongly opposed direct clerical participation in the government or politics.

Key Shi’ite political parties like Al Dawa and SCIRI do have a strong religious character, but have so far been largely secular in their stated goals and actions. Although Al Dawa and SCIRI operated in Iran from 1980 onwards, they remain Iraqi nationalists, and their “gratitude” to Iran is often limited – particularly because of Iran’s history of treating them on an opportunistic basis before the fall of Saddam Hussein. Members of Al Dawa can privately be sharply critical of Iran, and members of both parties resent past pressure to recognize the authority of Iran’s supreme leader.

The bad news is that Shi’ite are increasingly willing to take revenge against Sunnis for the actions of Islamist extremist insurgents. Many Shi’ites have reacted to the debate over federalism during the drafting of the constitution by coming to support a Shi’ite federation in the south. The Shi’ite coalition that participated in the December 15, 2005 election is divided on this issue, but many Shi’ites clearly want some form of separatism or autonomy. This seems to be particularly true of the oil rich areas in the far south and around Basra.

Shi'ite support for a “united” Iraq in no way means that Shi’ites do not feel it is "their turn" to have control over Iraqi politics, power, and wealth. Many Shi’ites feel that former Ba'athists should be punished for their actions in the previous regime. Most important, an increasing number seem to support revenge or "payback" for attacks by the Sunni insurgents.

Shi’ite Factions and the Various Militias

The years following Saddam's fall have led to growing tensions between Shi’ite and Sunni. The seriousness of these tensions has grown since late 2003 because of repeated Sunni insurgent attacks on Shi’ite targets. They have also been a reaction to Sunni politics. For example, both
Iraq’s Sunni interim president, Ghazi al-Yahwar, and King Abdullah of Jordan, sounded warnings about the risks of Shi’ite dominance and possible Iranian influence before the January 30, 2005 elections.\textsuperscript{1575}

Arab Shi’ites, in contrast, have been increasingly polarized by the Sunni suicide attacks on Shi’ite targets, kidnappings, over killings and disappearances described in previous chapters, which have intensified since the January 2005 elections. They are all too aware that figures like Zarqawi have threatened jihad against Shi’ites and have said they are not legitimate followers of Islam.

The main Shi’ite leaders in the government have continued to seek an inclusive political solution and reach out to the Sunnis, but many of their followers have increasingly reacted to Sunni attacks by taking revenge or seeking to exclude Sunnis from their neighborhoods, government jobs, contracts, and the security services.

Although the CPA tried to establish legal barriers to maintaining militias by issuing Order 91 in April 2004, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and the faction of Abdul Aziz al-Hakim still have large militia elements. These are forces that Sunni groups have increasingly accused of committing atrocities against them since the spring of 2005. Al Dawa, the Badr Organization, and the Iraqi Hezbollah remain potential security problems Sunnis feel particularly threatened by the Badr Organization, many of whom have been incorporated into the special security forces.

The Bush Administration summarized the risks posed by Shi’ite militias as follows in its October 13, 2005 report to the Congress on “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq:”

More than a dozen militias have been documented in Iraq, varying in size from less than a hundred to tens of thousands of members. Some were organized in loose cellular structures, while others had a more conventional military organization. Some were concentrated around a single locale, while others had a more regional footprint. Some of them were wholly indigenous, while others received support such as training, equipment, and money from outside Iraq.

Typically, the militias were armed with light weapons and operated as cells or small units. Even if they do not take up arms against the government, militias can pose a long-term challenge to the authority and sovereignty of the central government. This was the driving force behind the creation of Coalition Provisional Authority Order 91 and the Transition and Re-Integration Committee. For the same reason, Article 27 of the Transitional Administrative Law and Article 9 of the draft Iraqi Constitution prohibit armed forces or militias that are not part of the Iraqi Armed Forces.

The realities of Iraq’s political and security landscape work against completing the transition and re-integration of all Iraqi militias in the short-term. Provided the constitution is ratified in October, the government elected in December will have a four-year term of office, and it will have the task of executing the militia-control provisions of the constitution. Although it is often referred to as an Iraqi militia, the Jaysh al Mahdi (or “Mahdi Army”) of radical Shia cleric Moqtada al Sadr fought Coalition Forces and Iraqi forces in April and August of 2004. The Peshmerga and the Badr Organization are viewed as militias by the Iraqi government and Coalition Forces, while the Mahdi Army is viewed as a potentially insurgent organization.

• Badr Organization. Officially known as the Badr Organization for the Reconstruction and Development, it is the militia of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iran (SCIRI), the largest Shi’ite party in Iraq. It is reported to have links with both Iranian and Iraqi intelligence services and provides protective security for many Shi’ite religious sites as well as religious and secular leaders. Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani is protected by the Badr militia. The Badr Organization has been implicated in the revenge killings of Ba’athists and has also been involved in combat and street fighting with Moqtada al-Sadr’s Mahdi Army.

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• Jaysh al Mahdi. The Mahdi Army of Moqtada al-Sadr engaged in open combat with Coalition and Iraqi forces in April and August of last year, most notably in the battles in and around Najaf. The Mahdi Army has continued to exist after an October 2004 ceasefire agreement, although the Iraqi government has made repeated calls for its disbandment. The exact size of the organization is unknown. There is evidence that they are supplied from sources outside of Iraq, most notably Iran.

This report was updated and reissued to Congress in February of 2006. The section devoted to Iraqi militias differed from the earlier assessment. Specifically, its tone was less ambiguous as it declared that the “presence of militias is a continuing threat to the rule of law and a potentially destabilizing influence on both security and governance.”

The Department of Defense’s concerns over the “integration” of these militias into ISF units differed substantially as well. In the October report, it was assessed that, “The realities of Iraq’s political and security landscape work against completing the transition and re-integration of all Iraqi militias in the short-term.” In the February report however, the self-integration of the militias into government security forces caused US government concern that while “not inconsistent with the official policy,” it may result “in security forces that may be more loyal to their political support organization than to the central Iraqi government of constitution.”

The extensive role played by Shi’ite militias in death squads became increasingly apparent in the wake of sectarian violence that stemmed from the Askariya shrine bombing. The numerous assassinations that took place during this time, many of which were conducted by such Shi’ite groups, accounted for more than four times as many deaths in March as bombings and other mass-casualty attacks according to military data. Indeed it is likely even more, as many shooting deaths are never reported.

This led US officials to assert in early April that Shi’ite militias posed the greatest threat to Iraqi security and will be the most daunting and long-term challenge for whatever new government takes form. Echoing these concerns, in an interview with the BBC that same month, Ambassador Khalilzad described militia groups as the infrastructure of civil war.

In addressing the issue however, the US largely deferred to the Iraqi MOI and MOD. “They [the Iraqi government] recognize the problem. But there’s been no decision as to what to do about it,” said Maj. Gen. Joseph Peterson, the top US officer working with Iraq’s police force.

The May 2006 “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq” report again differed from previous DoD assessments of Shi’ite militias. Despite comments by US officials that militias posed the greatest threat to Iraqi security, made in between the reports, the May document labels “terrorists and foreign fighters…the most serious and immediate threat during this reporting period.” In addition, it flatly acknowledged that militias had been involved in sectarian violence and that they had been successful in infiltrating some members into the ISF, a worry mentioned in the February report:

“Militia groups help both maintain and undermine security in Iraq, as well as contribute to achieving the goals of their affiliated political parties. In many cases, these militias, whether authorized or not, provide protection for people and religious sites where the Iraqi police are perceived to be unable to provide adequate support. Sometimes they work with the Iraqi police. In some cases, they operate as a power base for militia leaders trying to advance their own agendas. Militia leaders influence the political process through intimidation and hope to gain influence with the Iraqi people through politically based social welfare programs. Militias often act extra-judicially via executions and political assassinations – primarily perpetrated by large, well-organized Shi’a militia groups and some small Sunni elements. Militias are also sometimes engaged in purely criminal activity.
Iraq’s Kurds and some Shi’a Arabs generally view their militias as necessary and beneficial, but the existence of such armed groups exacerbates mistrust and tension within Iraq’s population. The militias could also undermine the legitimacy of Iraq’s new government and Security Forces and could challenge the country’s unity...

...Although some minor groups did disband, [as ordered The Transitional Administrative Law, Coalition Provisional Authority Order 91, and the Iraqi Constitution] the Badr Organization (which was entitled to government assistance) and Jaysh al-Mahdi (which was not, since its forces fought against the Coalition) have not disbanded. In addition, although some Peshmerga forces have joined the ISF, other units remain intact as the de facto security force for the Kurdish region. Although legally authorized, the special status accorded to the Peshmerga is an occasional source of contention with both Shi’a and Sunni leaders. Individual militia members have been incorporated into the ISF, but the loyalties of some probably still lie, to some extent, with their ethno-sectarian leaders. Shi’a militias, in particular, seek place members into Army and police units as a way to serve their interests and gain influence. This is particularly evident in the Shi’a dominated south, where militia members have hindered the implementation of objective law enforcement.

Shi’a militias have been involved in sectarian violence. Tactics employed by such militias have varied, including death squads, Sharia courts, and campaigns of intimidation. Shi’a militias, including the Badr Organization and Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM), have been accused of committing abuses against Sunni civilians, exacerbating sectarian tensions. In addition, JAM is implicated in much of the unrest that followed the February 22 Samarra mosque bombing. The Shi’a militias receive arms and other support from Iran, reinforcing Sunni fears of Iranian domination and further elevating ethno-sectarian violence. JAM and some smaller Shi’a extremist groups have attacked both Sunni Arabs and Coalition forces. Because of the Iranian-sponsored training and technological support, these operations are among the most lethal and effective conducted against Coalition forces.

In September, CENTCOM labeled the militias as the “largest contributors to sectarian violence in Iraq.” 1582 By October, the US military stated that killings by the Mahdi army far outstripped killings by the Badr Brigades. Militia activity in the early fall of 2006 was characterized by the Mahdi Army growing rogue components outside of Moqtada al-Sadr’s control. Officials estimated that 23 militias operated in Baghdad in the early fall and that most of them were Shi’ite. In mid-October Iraqi and US officials said that the number of militias in Baghdad was increasing and that they were “splintering into smaller, more radicalized cells.” In some parts of the capital, residents had started blaming smaller militias and criminal gangs for kidnappings and attacks rather than the Mahdi Army or Badr Brigades. Shi’ites explained that joblessness and frustration was driving young men to form the rogue death squads. US commanders said that in some ways the news was good because it meant a less cohesive movement, but at the same time it made it difficult to identify and isolate militia members.1583

The August-November Stability and Security in Iraq update by the Department of Defense stated, “The most significant development in the Iraqi security environment was the growing role of Shi’a militants. It is likely that Shi’a militants were responsible for more civilian casualties than those associated with terrorist organization. Shi’a militants were the most significant threat to the Coalition presence in Baghdad and southern Iraq.” 1584

In the fall of 2006 Shi’ite militias remained non-hierarchical and largely disorganized with vast rogue components. SCIRI remained the most powerful Shi’ite political actor, but al-Sadr’s Mahdi Army and its various factions controlled the streets. On November 15, Gen. Michael Hayden, Director of the CIA, told the Senate Armed Services Committee that approximately 20,000 to 30,000 active Shi’a militiamen were hindering progress in Iraq, but many more tacitly supported militias.1585
The Role of the Badr Organization

Many Sunnis have vehemently condemned the Badr Organization. The Badr Organization, and its precursor the Badr Brigade, was created by SCIRI and trained by the Iranian military. What influence the Iranians may have over the Badr is unclear. Once more, Sunnis assert that the Badr are the ones responsible for the targeting and assassination of a number of senior Sunni clerics, many from the Muslim Scholars’ Board. Such charges are virtually impossible to disprove.

While it is far from clear how much the Badr Corps or other Shi’ites are to blame, some Sunnis feel that the Badr Corps has been responsible for targeting Sunni leaders and figures, killing them and dumping their bodies. Baghdad’s central morgue began to detect such killings shortly after the new government was formed on April 28, 2005, and reported that at least 30 cases had been found by late June.

The killers were said to have worn police uniforms, available at a cheap price throughout Iraq, while seizing some victims. They also had Toyotas and glock pistols, which are more difficult to obtain. There have also been mass abductions and killings of ordinary Sunnis, like 14 Sunni farmers who were taken from a Baghdad vegetable market on May 5, 2005. It was possible that insurgents have done this to try to foment sectarian tension, but the frequency and location of many revenge killings and acts of intimidation raises questions about whether this is a credible explanation for many incidents.1586

Many Sunnis opposed the appointment of Bayan Jabr as Minister of the Interior in April 2005, claiming that, as a member of SCIRI, he was a pawn of the Iranians. They also alleged that the ministry’s Wolf Brigade, led by Abdul Waleed, was responsible for some of the assassinations of Sunni figures.1587 By the fall of 2005, many Iraqis saw Iraq’s Interior Ministry and the police as predominantly Shi’ite in orientation and the ranks of the Badr Brigade as having been incorporated into MOI police forces. The Army, meanwhile, was seen as being predominantly Sunni in makeup.1588

The Role of Moqtada al-Sadr

Unlike most Iraqi religious leaders who are "quietists,” and believe the clergy should only play a limited role in politics, Moqtada al-Sadr is an activist who has played a controversial yet powerful role since the fall of Saddam Hussein. He is related to Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Al-Sadr and Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr: two of Iraq’s greatest activist clerics, both of whom were killed by Saddam Hussein, and to whom Moqtada owes much of his success.

The Sadr family accumulated power and wealth in the Shi’ite world for centuries, but was most well known in the 20th century for challenging the quietist tradition. Baqir al-Sadr achieved religious academic success. However, Baqir expressed radical ideas instead of aspiring to leadership of the Hawza (institution of Islamic learning). He emphasized government of the jurisprudent, or government under Islamic law. Citing the impotence of the quietists, Baqir and his followers challenged tradition and started the movement that paved the way for Moqtada’s success. The Baath regime felt the threat of Baqir and in 1979, it killed many of his followers and a year later, Baqir.

Baqir’s cousin, Sadiq al-Sadr emerged in 1993 to continue the anti-quietist movement. Ironically, the regime decided that Sadiq would make a placid Shi’ite leader, and supported him
as the new Ayatollah. Sadiq’s power over the Shi’ite community allowed him to progressively relaunch his cousin’s anti-quietist campaign. Sadiq united the political and military arenas with the religious. He became actively involved in the lives of the people and listened to their struggles. Sadiq created vast popular support among poor Shi’ites. In 1999 Saddam Hussein could no longer tolerate Sadiq’s threat and had him assassinated, along with his two eldest sons. Sadiq’s legacy was one that gave Shi’ites hope and a reason to search for their identities, despite continued adversity. He also embraced a sense of Islamic unity often proclaiming, “There is no Sunna and no Shia. Yes to Islamic unity!” The split between quietists and Sadr activists was solidified by the time the US invaded in 2003.

Moqtada al-Sadr accumulated massive popular support among poor Shi’ites following the invasion, but he did so without much of the usual criteria for success. Moqtada lacked political and public experience, never ascended to the highest levels of religious erudition, received little if any foreign backing, and lacked a financial base. Neither was Moqtada al-Sadr a likely heir of the Sadrist movement. He received little attention from his father, Sadiq al-Sadr, whom had already appointed Ayatollah Kadhim al-Ha’iri as his successor. Ha’iri had lived in Iran since the 1970s, thus when he acquired power in 1999, he issued Moqtada responsibilities that would normally only have been given to a marja (a senior Hawza scholar): issuing fatwas (jurisprudential announcements) and receiving khums (alms). Due to his own lack of religious eligibility and his young age, Moqtada quickly acquired a following among students – those who had forgone studies in favor of street politics and young, poor Shi’ites who resented the occupation. In the wake of the invasion, the quietists and the political process offered no effective forms of representation. Shi’ites turned to al-Sadr for direction. Al-Sadr’s new young followers acquired a reputation for lawlessness in the months following the invasion. As his popularity grew, Moqtada “gave voice to a proud, authentic popular identity while advocating violent struggle against the root causes of oppression.”

Al-Sadr has been accused of having a hand in the murder of rival Shi’ite clerics like the Grand Ayatollah Abd al-Majid al-Khoi on April 10, 2003. He attacked the US presence in Iraq almost immediately after the fall of Saddam Hussein and denounced the members of the Iraqi interim government as puppets in a sermon in Najaf as early as July 18, 2003.

The Rise and Temporary Fall of the Mahdi Militia

Sadr set up a militia for volunteers, Jaysh al-Mahdi, which began playing a role in the intra-sect Shi’ite power struggle as early as October 13, 2003; al-Sadr's men attacked supporters of moderate Shi'ite Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani near the Imam Hussein shrine. His Mahdi Army presented a serious threat to Coalition and government forces in Najaf, in Sadr City in Baghdad, and in other Shi’ite areas in the south during much of the summer and early fall of 2004. Moqtada al-Sadr called on his followers in Iraq to rise up and attack US forces on August 5th, and subsequent fights broke out in three cities between his supporters and US an Iraqi security forces, especially in Najaf and Sadr City in Baghdad. US officials indicated that US forces faced up to 160 attacks per week in Sadr City between August and September 2004 of varying severity.

The defeat of Sadr's forces, and a series of political compromises, led Sadr to turn away from armed struggle in the late fall and early winter of 2005. US officials indicated that the number of attacks dropped significantly to between zero and five a week in early 2005, and they remained at or below this level through November 2005.
General John Abizaid remarked in March 2005, however, “we have not seen the end of Moqtada Sadr’s challenge.”

Although Iraqi government forces have been able to move in to the area, Sadr’s movement still plays a major political role in Sadr City in Baghdad, and remains active in poorer Shi’ite areas throughout the country.

Sadr's supporters sponsored demonstrations calling for US forces to leave Iraq in April 2005, and top Sadr aides in his Independent National Bloc issued warnings to Ibrahim Jaafari, then the prime minister designate, that he must pay more attention to these demands or that the Sadr faction might leave the United Iraqi Alliance and become an active part of the opposition. The group also demanded the release of some 200 Sadr activists arrested during earlier fighting and that all criminal charges against Sadr be dropped.

Resurgence in 2005

Sadr was able to exploit the political weakness and divisions of other Shi’ite movements in the south and their lack of ability to govern, as well as the fact other hard-line Islamist movements won significant numbers of seats in local governments in key areas like Basra.

In summer 2005, Sadr attempted to collect one million signatures on a petition that asked the Coalition to leave Iraq in what appeared to be his burgeoning attempts to recast himself as a major political force within Iraq. Sadr revived the Mahdi Army, which began to be openly active in parts of Southern Iraq such as Basra, Amarah, and Nasiriyah, and still had cells in Najaf and Qut as well. While some US official sources stated the army was relatively weak, it began to hold parades again. While only limited numbers of arms were displayed, it was clear that such weapons were still available in the places where they had been hidden during the fighting the previous year.

By the late spring of 2005, the Mahdi Army seemed to be the largest independent force in Basra, played a major role in policing Amarah, and had effectively struck a bargain with the government police in Nasiriyah that allowed it to operate in part o the city. By the late fall of 2005, some sources estimated that some 90% of the 35,000 police in Northeast Baghdad had ties to Sadr and the Mahdi forces. They were reported to be playing a major role in pushing Sunnis out of Shi'ite neighborhoods.

Unlike most militias, the Mahdi Army had the active participation of Shi'ite clergy, mostly "activists" who strongly supported Sadr. One reason for their rebirth was the lack of effective action by the government. For example, the government police in Nasiriyah had 5,500 men, but was 2,500 men short of its goal. In August 2005, Basra police Chief Hassam Sawadi said that he had lost control over three-quarters of his police force, and that men in his ranks were using their power to assassinate opponents.

Sadr has remained publicly supportive of the political process in Iraq, and has urged Shi’ites to avoid sectarian fighting with the Sunni population. At the same time, his organization was accused of a rash of political assassinations and kidnappings in the Shi’ite south in the summer of 2005. On August 24, 2005, an attack on Sadr’s office in Najaf led to unrest among Shi’ite populations there and in other cities. Sadr’s movement also began to publicly reassert itself in late summer of 2005, capitalizing on the release of Hazem Araji and other Sadr leaders from prison.
Sadr did, however, continue to call for calm and continued his public support of non-reprisal. He sided with anti-federalist Sunni leaders during the drafting and review of the Iraqi constitution. He also supported continued Shi’ite political involvement in the new government, although many fear that he eventually wants to see a more fundamentalist government in control of Iraq.

His organization staged several large demonstrations as a show of strength. In mid-September, militiamen from the Mahdi Army in Basra directly engaged in battles against US and British troops. Shootouts between supporters of Sadr and Coalition forces also erupted in Sadr City during the last week in September. On October 27, members of the Mahdi army clashed with Sunni gunmen outside of Baghdad. The fighting, which occurred in the village of Bismaya in the Nahrawan area south of Baghdad, claimed more than thirty lives. The militia battles in October proved to be the deadliest in months.

**Sadr, the December 2005 Elections, and the New Government**

Sadr has pursued both military and political strategies. He entered into a new political alliance with the two largest Shi’ite parties in the country on the very same day his forces battled militias in Bismaya. The alliance brought together Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari’s Dawa Party, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, and Sadr’s supporters. The move made Moqtada Sadr an even larger player in Iraqi politics. Because of the deal, Sadr-backed candidates would appear on the same ticket alongside members of the Shi’ite-led government in the December elections. This was a reversal from Sadr’s earlier pledged to support the elections but said he would not be supporting any particular list of candidates.

Although US officials were encouraged by Sadr’s pledge to support the December 15 elections, Sadr continued to refuse to disband his militia, which continued to grow in power and influence in the fall of 2005. There were also reports that many Mahdi members have joined the police and other government security forces, contributing to the already fragmented nature of the Iraqi security forces.

After the fall of 2005, his organization and other Shi’ite groups with similar beliefs were increasingly accused of political assassinations and kidnappings, as have Kurdish forces in the North. Sadr’s Mahdi Army maintains control over certain areas in cities like Basra and Sadr City, and creates an environment of fear according to local accounts.

After the December 15 elections, Sadr’s group was awarded more than 30 seats in the parliament. These seats kept Sadr in the Shi’ite Coalition, but they were also instrumental in determining the appointment of al-Jaafari as the next Prime Minister of Iraq. Al-Jaafari’s opponent, defeated by only one vote, was a member of SCIRI, an organization that rivaled Sadr’s al-Dawa party. Despite the fact that Sadr was not himself an elected official, he and his followers were able to play the role of “king maker” within the Shi’ite coalition.

This de facto political alliance between al-Jaafari and al-Sadr created tensions between these two figures, the US and other members of parliament. As the Unsought to pressure al-Jaafari to maintain control of the militias, the Prime Minister increasingly met with disapproval from the Sunni and Kurdish coalitions, and even from some within his own party. Al-Jaafari’s relationship with al-Sadr and the al-Dawa party, while the source of American frustration with the Prime Minister, was also al-Jaafari’s primary base of support.
Sadr and the Attack on the Askariya Shrine

The influence of Sadr and his Mahdi Army was evident in the violence that followed the February attack on the Askariya shrine. Almost immediately after the bombing, al-Sadr ordered his Mahdi Army to protect Shi’ite shrines across Iraq, and blamed the US and Iraqi government for failing to protect the Askariya shrine saying, “If the government had real sovereignty, then nothing like this would have happened.”

In a speech from Basra, al-Sadr also called for restraint and unity amongst Iraqi’s: “We got rid of the evil Saddam and now we have a new dictatorship, the dictatorship of Britain, the US and Israel…I call on Muslims, Sunnis and Shi’ites, to be brothers…Faith is the strongest weapons, not arms.” He also ordered his listeners to not attack mosques in retaliation saying, “There is no Sunni mosques and Shi’ite mosques, mosques are for all Muslims…it is one Islam and one Iraq.” He also called for “a united peaceful demonstration in Baghdad” and labeled “Ba’athists and extremists” as “the enemy.”

There were numerous accusations that despite these calls for restraint and unity, the Mahdi Army was conducting attacks against Sunni individuals and destroying and occupying Sunni mosques across Iraq.

While it was difficult to prove that the Mahdi Army was responsible for these attacks, individual accounts by victims seemed credible. For example, Raad Taha, a Sunni taxi driver, was falsely accused by a Shi’ite acquaintance accused him of being an insurgent. He was taken from his apartment by eight men from the Mahdi Army in front of his wife (a Shi’ite) and children, and taken to a location where he was beaten and interrogated for over a day. Although he was eventually released, his family fled the city.

Other Iraqis were not so lucky. Mohammed al-Jubouri said Mahdi members killed two of his nephews. One was killed in a drive by shooting, the other was abducted and discovered days later at a morgue, executed by a gun shot wound to the head and showing signs of torture.

Despite a series of coordinated retaliatory attacks carried out in a Shi’ite slum and Sadr stronghold in Baghdad on March 13, al-Sadr publicly called for restraint again. After numerous car bombs and mortar attacks killed over 50 and wounded nearly 200, Sadr avoided blaming Iraqi Sunnis and instead held the US and al-Qa’ida culpable. At a news conference, Sadr declared, “I can fight the terrorists. I am able to face them, militarily and spiritually…but I don’t want to slip into a civil war. Therefore, I will urge calm.”

In the midst of this violence, the Mahdi Militia became the primary security provider in Sadr City. Checkpoints were established throughout the neighborhoods and patrols were conducted by armed young men in soccer jerseys or black uniforms now associated with Sadr’s followers.

The clerics of both Shi’ite and Sunni factions played a role in instigating and limiting the violence and were able to escalate or deescalate by controlling their followers during this time. This activist role of clerics was in contrast to the secular rule that had been the norm in Iraq both before and during Saddam’s era. “The clerics are the kingmakers, the peacemakers and the war-makers,” said Ismael Zayer, editor of an Iraqi newspaper. A political scientist at Baghdad University, Hassan Bazzaz concurred: “If the religious leaders decided to go all the way to a civil war they could, in no time.”
**Relationship with External Forces**

After the December elections, and continuing into 2006, the young cleric visited several of Iraq’s neighboring countries in the region. Although not an elected official, during these visits Sadr frequently met with heads of state and often made statements in which he appeared to be speaking on behalf of the Iraqi people or government. In Saudi Arabia, Sadr asked King Abdullah to press the US to commit for a date of withdrawal from Iraq. In late January, amidst international tensions over Iran’s nuclear program, Sadr made a statement of solidarity with Tehran during a visit, pledging to come to the defense of the country from an attack by an outside aggressor. Although he did not elaborate, this statement, it was made amid ongoing negotiations to form a coalition government, and exacerbated Sunni fears of a “Shi’ite crescent” based on a Shi’ite dominated Iraqi government aligned with Iran.

In February, Sadr visited President Assad of Syria. This was followed by a trip to Jordan where Sadr said in an interview with al-Jazeera that there was “nothing good” in Iraq’s new constitution. In Lebanon, Sadr professed that he had come to promote peace and “to improve relations between the Syrian people and the Lebanese people.”

Throughout the life of the war in Iraq, the US accused al-Sadr and the Mahdi Army of collaborating with Iran and receiving weapons and financing from their fellow Shi’ite neighbor. American officials also said that Iranian Revolutionary Guard and the Ministry of Intelligence and Security actively trained Shi’ite militiamen in Iraq. US intelligence officials also believed that Mahdi Army fighters had been trained by Hezbollah in Lebanon – widely believed to be Al-Sadr’s model for his militia.

In late November 2006 the *New York Times* reported that according to an American intelligence official 1,000 to 2,000 Hezbollah fighters had trained various Shi’ite militias in Lebanon, although there was no evidence that Iraqis fought alongside their Lebanese counterparts in the July war against Israel. The official also said, “[Iran] has been a link to Lebanese Hezbollah and have helped facilitate Hezbollah training inside of Iraq, but more importantly Jaish al-Mahdi member going to Lebanon.”

However, a Sadr aid responded to the article, saying that the Madhi Army did not receive training from Hezbollah. “We confirm that the only relationship we have with Hezbollah is a religious one,” he said. “We emphasize that we didn't send anyone from the militia to Lebanon and no one from Hezbollah came here to train the Mahdi Army.”

**The Rising Threat of Shi’ite Militias Over the Summer of 2006**

Violence inflicted by Shi’ite militias developed into a key obstacle facing US military efforts in Iraq. In early August, General George Casey attributed the majority of recent violent deaths in Baghdad to Shi’ite death squads—signaling a shift in the main threats facing US operations in the capital, which originally centered on Sunni insurgents and al-Qa’ida elements.

The August 2006 DoD Report to Congress on Iraq warned that militias—whether legal or illegal—ultimately created “a more dangerous environment for the Iraqi community...their continued existence challenges the legitimacy of the constitutional government and a conduit for foreign interference.”
As part of renewed efforts to secure Baghdad, Casey asserted that US and Iraqi forces would dismantle all death squads, regardless of their affiliation. He stated, “We’re going after people who are actively killing and murdering other Iraqis.”1616 Shi’ite militias were often blamed for execution-style assassinations against Sunnis that involved massive “body dumps” across Baghdad and other parts of the country.

On August 7, Iraqi troops and American security advisers led an air and ground attack on Sadr City, a stronghold of Moqtada al-Sadr and his Mahdi Army. According to a US military statement, the operation was aimed at “individuals involved in punishment and torture cell activities.”1617 Iraqi forces and US advisers came under fire that “lasted for the duration of the operation and continued as they left the neighborhood.” 1618 The raid killed three people, and wounded twelve others. And the noise from heavy gunfire and explosions sent civilians running for cover.

In a break with the United States on military tactics, Prime Minister al-Maliki sharply criticized the raid. He said, “This operation used weapons that are unreasonable to detain someone—like using planes.” 1619 In a statement on government television, he said that he was “very angered and pained” and cautioned “reconciliation cannot go hand in hand with operations that violate the rights of citizens this way.” 1620 He said, “This operation is rejected, and it was conducted without the agreement of the government...” 1621 Al-Maliki apologized to Iraqis and said, “this won’t happen again.” 1622

An official from Sadr’s office, Abu Mustafa Saidi, said that during the battle, Sadr, who was traveling in Najaf, called on the militia leader to exercise self-restraint, and “informed them to make everything calm so the Iraqi and American soldiers would have no excuses for more attacks.” 1623 Joost Hiltermann of the International Crisis Group said “unless directly provoked, Sadrists will lay low, because they know the Americans’ time in Iraq is coming to an end. Why would they risk another major loss of fighters if it’s not necessary. Americans in their eyes are already defeated—they’re going to leave.” 1624

In spite of rising tensions between US forces and the Mahdi Army, the United States was careful to avoid an open confrontation with the militia. Following the attack on Sadr City, President Jalal Talabani met with top US commander in Iraq, General George Casey to discuss security operations in Baghdad. He told Casey “it is no one’s interest to have a confrontation with Sadr’s movement.” 1625 Sadr’s party, the Sadr Trend held 30 seats in the 275-member National Assembly, and controlled several ministries. According to Hiltermann, Iraq’s government was “beholden to the Sadrist,” because of Sadr’s role in bringing al-Maliki to power. 1626

The United States had to be cautious of demonizing Sadr, who had significant political clout, and a loyal following. Hiltermann warned, “To alienate [Sadr’s] people—who constitute the urban underclass in Iraq—is to invite revolution.” 1627 According to the US military, there were between 6,000 and 10,000 Mahdi army militiamen in Baghdad.

Since militias were tied to various factions in the Shi’ite-led government, and held significant popular support, the United States had to deal with the complexity of clamping down on militia-instigated violence without simultaneously alienating political leaders, and provoking public unrest.

Internal divisions within the Shi’ite community exacerbated the increasingly complex security environment in Iraq. In addition to the sectarian power struggle between Sunnis and Shi’ites,
violence between rivaling Shi’ite factions and growing divides within Shi’ite militias, emerged as new threats to the country’s stability.

Reports indicated Moqtada al-Sadr faced new challenges to his authority, as some followers were breaking away from his command, and independent cells were developing within the Mahdi army.

Militia members, Iraqi politicians, and Western officials described the Mahdi army as an increasingly fluid organization that was splintering into factions of fighters, and local commanders were growing more distant from a central authority figure. According to US Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad, “there are forces that are controlled by Moqtada, but there are commanders that are not controlled by him; there are death squads that are not controlled by him.”1628 Iraqi Col. Talib Abdul Razzaq, a battalion commander in Baghdad, said, “each section of Sadr City has its own leader. But there is no coordination among them.”1629

While the severity of this fragmentation was uncertain, it pointed to a larger obstacle in US efforts to curb violence in Iraq: as the insurgency evolved, it was becoming increasingly difficult for US forces to identify and characterize the perpetrators of violence. It was unclear whether acts of violence—from extrajudicial assassinations to criminal operations—were coordinated or sporadic, national or local, and to what extent they involved a central command. The August 2006 Quarterly DoD Report to Congress noted that the attacks in Iraq could not “be categorized as the result of a single organized or unified opposition or insurgency,” and warned that the security situation was “at its most complex state since the initiation of Operation Iraqi Freedom.”1630

While a structured force was more readily containable and apt for political bargaining, trends in the nature of the insurgency suggested that the United States might be struggling to fight a more diffuse, and amorphous enemy—for a long time to come.

US allegations of Iranian support for Shi’ite militias resurfaced in the summer of 2006. In late June, General George Casey said that the American forces “are quite confident that the Iranians are providing weapons, improvised explosive devices (I.E.D.), technology and training to Shia extremist groups.” One indication of Iranian support is the increase in the number of attacks with bombs that feature shaped charges, which focus the explosive power in a single direction.1631 Casey also noted that extremist groups were conducting training in Iran, and in some cases, probably Lebanon, “using surrogates to conduct terrorist operations in Iraq…”1632

Assertions by Maj. Gen. Caldwell “that Shia extremist groups have received training through some sort of third element associated with Iraq,” re-emerged in mid-August amid a growing confrontation between the United States and the Mahdi Army, and rising tensions between the United States and Iran over Iran’s support for Hezbollah.1633

However, Gen. Caldwell appeared somewhat cautious in his statements. He did not allege that the Iranian government was directly involved in supporting Shi’ite militias, or that Iranian operatives were in Iraq, but rather Caldwell deliberately focused his statements on the role of proxy groups in providing weaponry and training to Shi’ites. He said, “There’s nothing that we have definitely found to say that there are any Iranians operating within the country of Iraq, but rather some clear surrogate elements have been doing this…We do believe that some Shi’ite elements have been in Iran receiving training. But the degree to which this is known and
endorsed by the government of Iran is uncertain.”  

Caldwell also refrained from identifying which Shi’ite groups Iran was implicated in supporting.

Officials from the Badr organization and the Mahdi army denied the allegations. Abdul Hadi al-Daraji, a Sadr spokesman said, “Usually such statements of the United States of America come after they have proven their incapability to control the security situation in Iraq...This is unrealistic. The Iraqis are not followers of Iran.”

The upsurge in violence in Iraq came at a time of heightened tensions between Israel and Lebanon. The Israeli army launched an attack on southern Lebanon on July 12, following Hezbollah’s capture of Israeli soldiers during a raid on northern Israel. Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki denounced the Israeli attacks on Lebanon, and said at a July 19 news conference in the fortified Green Zone, “The Israeli attacks and air strikes are completely destroying Lebanon’s infrastructure.” His comments marked a sharp break form President Bush’s stance, and they came in contrast to the lukewarm responses from some Sunni Arab governments, who were cautious to adopt a definitive stance on the aggression.

Some analysts perceived al-Maliki’s comments as a manifestation of the growing role of a Shi’ite Muslim identity across the Middle East and a movement toward the potential creation of a “Shi’ite crescent,” stretching from Iran to Iraq to Lebanon.

As the violent confrontation between Lebanon and Israel continued, demonstrations took place across the Middle East condemning Israeli aggression, and showing support for Hezbollah. On August 4, one of the greatest protests, organized by Sadr, was held in Baghdad, where hundreds of thousands of Shi’ites gathered yelling “death to Israel,” and “death to America.”

Sadr had earlier urged Sunnis and Shi’ites to unite so that Muslims would be able to defeat Israel. At a speech in the southern city of Kufa on July 21, he declared, “We promise you that we will not forget our people in Lebanon despite our suffering from the American occupation. I will continue defending my Shi’ite and Sunni brothers and I tell them that if we unite, we will defeat Israel without the use of weapons.”

He later pledged “to go to Lebanon to defend it if this would stop the war.” And declared, “We, the unified Iraqi people, will stand with the Lebanese people to end the ominous trio of the United States, Israel and Britain, which is terrorizing Iraq, Lebanon, Afghanistan, and other occupied nations.”

The dynamics of the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict provoked a renewed sense of unity among some Arabs. Iraqi Vice President Abdul-Mahdi said, “These horrible massacres carried out by the Israeli aggression, like what happened at Qana, incite in us a spirit of solidarity.” The conflict was simultaneously creating a backlash effect against the United States. Given its ties to Israel, America was perceived as a cobelligerent—hurting US credibility in the region, and hampering the cause for political reform across the Middle East.

Sadr, the Mahdi Army, and Civil War: An Evolution 2004-2007

Al-Sadr would present additional problems in any more intense civil conflict. Sadr also has a unique ability to employ “gun and ballot alike” and his transformation “from obscure rebelrousers to hunted rebel to statesman.” He controls the Mahdi Militia, as well as the weapons and equipment that go with it and has been willing to use violence in the past. Yet his followers have also dominated the new Iraqi parliament as well as the Ministries of Transportation and
Both of these qualities add to the perception among those loyal to Sadr that he is a provider and protector for the Iraqi people.

Sadr has also consistently taken a hard line stance against the presence of US and Coalition forces while exploiting a unique ability to exploit the Shi’ite poor. Sadr has won support among Iraq’s poor and dissatisfied Shi’ites in Baghdad and central and southern Iraq. For example, although residents of Baghdad and other middle and upper-class areas have long referred to those that reside in Sadr City slums as “shuruqi,” or easties, Sadr followers have turned this derogatory word into a label of pride and defiance.

In an interview, one Sadr aide used terms such as “charity” and “public defense” when describing the duties of the Mahdi Army. Dr. Yousif al-Nasry stated that the army is not only helping Sadr City, but all of Iraq’s poor and weak citizens and has helped to build schools and clean city streets in the absence of government services. Yet the extent of these activities remains unclear, to the degree that they occur at all. Additionally, these statements do not indicate whether Sadr and the Mahdi Army genuinely see themselves in this manner, or are simply trying to portray their organization as a servant and protector of the people rather than a threat to Iraqi security. Regardless, Sadr and the Mahdi Army’s aid to displaced Shi’ite families arriving in Sadr City, furthered their image as a benevolent force in the Shi’ite community. Those families, which fled the sectarian violence occurring in their home cities, were greeted by a network of Sadr followers already in place to give them shelter in mosques and community centers.

The US-Iraqi raid on the Moustafa mosque, or “Husayniyah” strengthened al-Sadr’s position with his followers and the Shi’ite community in general and perpetuated the Mahdi Army’s image as a protector. While Shi’ite government leaders questioned the operation and called for investigations, al-Sadr was able to rally his supporters in the street and call for Iraqi solidarity against the US and Coalition.

Souad Mohammad, the director of the school across the street from the complex said, “They [US and Iraqi forces] came and killed the young people, and we want the Imam Mahdi Army to protect us, because they are from us, they are Iraqi people.” Another man, Jassim Mohamad Ali, who ran from the compound during the raid added, “The only thing I witness from the Mahdi Army, they have honor and are loyal to this country, and they try to keep the Iraqi streets clean.”

The media coverage of the event and subsequent accusations of a “massacre,” which caught the US off guard, led to rumors that the US was now operating with “death squads” and would kill people while they are praying. Spokesmen and commentators also said that the US was now targeting Shi’ites to stop the political process from succeeding. One individual called for a united Shi’ite front against terrorism, “whether it is Wahhabi or American.”

One key question, if the civil fighting does escalate to serious levels, is whether Sadr would seek to dominate the Shi’ite side, actively reject a continued US presence, and turn to Iran. SCIRI might do the same thing under some circumstances, but seems considerably less likely to do so than Sadr.

The extent to which Moqtada had control over the movement, particularly the Mahdi army, was also ambiguous. Accusations of Mahdi revenge killings in the wake of the February mosque bombing contradicted al-Sadr’s call for calm. A Sadrist imam in Baghdad agreed: “As far as
Moqtada’s control is concerned, there are countless instances where his authority is transgressed, notably by Jaysh al-Mahdi commanders. A Mahdi army commander also alleged that the military wing of the Sadrist movement operated outside of civilian structures.\footnote{1648} The political structure of the movement became more structured over time. The “Offices of the Second Martyr” oversaw economic, social, political, and press issues, and forged the links with the populous. Al-Sadr additionally instituted arbitration committees, comprised of local leaders that heard popular disputes. A Sadrist sympathizer attested that many people would rather bring their grievance to the arbitration committee than the police station, because the latter failed to adjudicate most cases.\footnote{1649}

US intelligence reports confirmed that Sadr had begun to lose control of factions within his Mahdi army, which was estimated to be greater than 200,000, but the exact number was largely unknown. A senior intelligence official said in late September that portions of the Mahdi army splintered off into freelance death squads and were not heeding Sadr’s calls for restraint. The officials believed that six major leaders had ventured beyond the control of Sadr, although most still said to be part of the Mahdi army. These rogue elements saw Sadr as “accommodating to the US” and “bound by politics.” Abu Dera, one of the uncontrolled leaders and a fighter in Sadr City, had a reputation of killing Sunnis, but when al-Sadr told him to stop he ignored the call; people began calling him “Shi’ite Zarqawi” and most Shi’ites in Sadr City supported him.\footnote{1650}

At the end of September Sadr ordered his followers to temporarily put down their weapons and cease attacks. Some analysts saw this as an effort to distance himself from former followers who were no longer loyal. Others argued it was merely an attempt to buy time in the face of increasing pressure from Iraqi and Coalition Forces. In either case, he issued four directives to his commanders, all of which seemed aimed at gaining a firmer control on his forces:\footnote{1651}

- Reduce the size of units to 75 fighters from as many as 400 to make the units more manageable.
- Issue new identification cards to Mahdi Army members to replace IDs that had been forged.
- Send every member to an orientation course that would outline the group’s mission.
- And lay down weapons temporarily.

Again in October Sadr said that he would denounce any members of the Mahdi Army who killed Iraqis. He stated, “There are rumors that there are groups or persons from the Mahdi Army are attacking the Iraqi people with no right to do so. It is not proved so far but, if proved, I will declare their names and will renounce them with no fear or hesitation.” He encouraged his militiamen to use Ramadan as a period to repent, rather than a month of increased sectarian attacks.\footnote{1652} He also urged the Mahdi Army to help return displaced Iraqis, both Sunnis and Shi’ites, to their homes, using “peaceful and diplomatic methods.”\footnote{1653}

The Mahdi Army’s role in perpetuating the civil conflict was seemingly related to al-Sadr’s lack of direct control over the military wing. Moqtada al-Sadr, whose father once professed unity of all Islam, found himself increasingly drawn into the sectarian conflict. The breakup of the Mahdi Army into rogue elements, however, may be reason to doubt Sadr’s ability to maintain his political base. Prime Minister Maliki said of the Mahdi Army, “We don’t know what the Mahdi Army means anymore. Some Sunnis now operate in the name of the Mahdi Army and dress in black as well. Ba’athists also, and foreign intelligence.” Al-Maliki emphasized that he would continue to work with al-Sadr to find a political solution to the violence. But Sadr’s inability to
control rogue militias and the blurred distinction between Mahdi militiamen would make the political dialogue futile.

The August-November Department of Defense Stability and Security Report in Iraq said of the Mahdi Army.\footnote{1654}

The group that is currently having the greatest negative affect on the security situation in Iraq is Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM), which has replaced al-Qaeda in Iraq as the most dangerous accelerator of potentially self-sustaining sectarian violence in Iraq. JAM exerts significant influence in Baghdad and the southern provinces of Iraq and on the Government of Iraq. JAM receives logistical support from abroad, and most, but not all, elements of the organization take direction from Muqtada al-Sadr. JAM and Badr Organization members periodically attack one another and are political rivals.

The principal rogue member of the Mahdi Army in the fall appeared to be Abu Dera, a man some referred to as the “Shi’ite Zarqawi.” His real name was Ismael Hafidh, according to a \textit{Newsweek} article.\footnote{1655} In an interview with Reuters, however, Abu Dera – which literally means “father shield” – said that he was simply misunderstood and that he was still loyal to Sadr. He said, “Sunnis are as much my brothers as Shi’ites. My only enemies are the occupiers.” He added in response to allegations of torture, “I would never mutilate a human being because Islam prohibits mutilation.” He blamed the violence in Iraq on the US-led “occupying” forces, adding that al-Maliki was not to blame for sanctioning his attempted capture in mid-October.\footnote{1656}

However, in a written interview with \textit{Time} Abu Dera presented slightly different responses. He said that he was “honored” to be called the Shi’ite Zarqawi and said that his fight was against \textit{takfiris} – a reference to Sunni insurgents – as well as the occupation. He said that his motivation was “a sense of holy duty toward my faith against any hostile enemy of my faith.” The \textit{Time} article stated that sources did not concur on whether Dera remained a part of the Mahdi Army, but as long as he maintained some ties to al-Sadr, Prime Minister Maliki was unlikely to sanction more raids against him.\footnote{1657}

A \textit{New York Times} article about al-Sadr said that the cleric made efforts in 2006 to look the “political part.” In the past, Sadr was described as capricious and image-obsessed, but by the end of 2006 he adopted a more “sophisticated image.” He made several visits abroad to Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Iran. A Sadr aide also said that he met regularly with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani’s son to learn “the arts of negotiation and compromise.” However, as Sadr worked on his communication skills, his control of the Madhi Army continued to slip away. At then of 2006 his picture was still visible in the homes of many poor Shi’ites, but his calls for calm went largely unheeded. The aide said that Sadr grew concerned about his waning control and the sectarian violence consuming the capital.\footnote{1658}

In a November 15 address to the Senate Armed Services Committee, the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Lt. Gen. Michael Maples, confirmed that clandestine Mahdi elements operated outside of Sadr’s control. He also said, “Sadr continues to refuse any discussion of disbanding his militia.”\footnote{1659}

Following the November 24 bombing attack in Sadr City that killed upwards of 200 people, the Mahdi Army took control of the streets and blamed the US and Iraqi governments for the sectarian violence. Al-Sadr also called on the Sunni Sheikh Hareth al-Dhari, head of the Association of Muslim Scholars, to issue fatwas condemning sectarian killings. He said that one fatwa should “prohibit the killing of all Shi’ite Muslims because this will save the blood of
Residents in Sadr City reported that the Mahdi Army garnered significant political support in their handling of the aftermath of the bombings. Residents said that the Mahdi Army moved the wounded and killed, setup checkpoints, and provided food, clothing, medical supplies, and cash to families of the deceased and wounded. Shi’ites stated that they saw no evidence of US or Iraqi soldiers helping and most said they would pledge support for the Mahdi Army in the future because they did all the things that the Iraqi government could not do. A Mahdi militiaman interviewed in the Washington Post article said that he thought the militia would be impossible to dismantled because it was the only source of support for many poor Shi’ites and could be trusted.

The Mahdi Army performed a military like ceremony on November 28 in a show of force, according to the Washington Times. A ceremonial gathering, however, did not mean that the Mahdi Army had reunited its rogue components. Militia factions were still very much out of Sadr’s control at the end of 2006 and it unlikely that militiamen would restrain themselves in reprisal attacks for the Sadr City bombing.

The Washington Post reported that a senior US intelligence official estimated that the Mahdi Army had grown eightfold in 2006 and maintained 40,000 to 60,000 militiamen at the end of the year. And USA Today said that the militia had 6,000 to 10,000 fighters in Baghdad. Reporting on the number of militia fighters in the Mahdi Army and other death squads varied greatly and it remained unclear at the end of 2006 how many fighters were involved in the daily sectarian violence. What was clear, however, was that violence spread from Baghdad to surrounding provinces – primarily Salahaddin, Diyala, Maysan, and Basra – in October and November, involving more Iraqis in reprisal attacks and forcing civilians to turn to militias and neighborhood gangs for protection.

The Mahdi Army continued to be the principal militia accused of propagating sectarian violence by the both Iraqi and US governments. Moreover, both reported that Sadr had lost his ability to control many of the militiamen and thus chose to disassociate himself with as many rogue components as possible. The Mahdi Army successfully infiltrated Iraqi security forces, but Shi’ites continued to join the militia as opposed to security forces as the US and Iraq cracked down on militia components within the ISF. It is important to note that membership in Shi’ite militias in Baghdad, as well as loosely organized Sunni neighborhood gangs, continued to grow – in part - because Iraqis saw no other alternatives that could adequately provide for their safety.

Reprisal attacks and nightly executions by the Mahdi Army were only part of the story. The US intelligence community continued to observe that Sadr lost control of many elements of his militia and that different factions were engaged in soft sectarian cleansing. Mahdi militiamen used intimidation, threats, kidnapping, and corruption in their roles in government Ministries to push opposing sects out of contested areas. An example was the efforts by militiamen to expel Sunnis from the Hurriya neighborhood in Baghdad in late 2006. But this cleansing also occurred against minorities in Basra, and the Mahdi army was actively engaged in a struggle to win political and economic support as far north as Mosul and Kirkuk.

As Sadr lost control of his militia, localized factions came to provide security for more and more Shi’ites throughout Iraq. The militia offered employment to young men, provided support to Muslims in Iraq,” and another should prohibit Sunnis from joining forces with al-Qa’ida in Iraq.
families who lost members to violence and offered reprisal, successively controlled key governmental ministries – which also in part funded the movement through corruption – and promised political power. These developments contributed to the large growth of membership in Sadr’s movement and Shi’ite sectarian control of economic and political space in southern Iraq and much of Baghdad.

On 21 December al-Sadr was reported to consider a plan to scale back militia activity in response to accusations that the Mahdi Army was fomenting the majority of sectarian violence. Sadr’s control of rogue elements of his militia, however, was doubtful at best and rather than a slowdown in violence, the last weeks of 2006 saw a spike in sectarian killings.

In response to President Bush’s plan to send roughly 17,500 US troops to Baghdad, Abdul-Razzaq al-Nidawi, a senior official in al-Sadr’s office in Najaf said, “We reject Bush’s new strategy and we think it will fail.” Sadr’s rejection of the plan raised the risk of a major battle between US led forces in Baghdad and the Mahdi Army, which could call upon some 60,000 fighters. At the same time, however, Sadr had other options.

On January 19 the US military reported that US and Iraqi forces captured a top aide to Sadr. Sadr’s office immediately condemned the arrest, but said that the Mahdi Army would not fight US forces during the holy month of Muharram, which began for Shi’ites on January 20. Sadr could choose between resistance and simply waiting out the US effort while keeping his loyal elements intact. Tactical victories against the Mahdi Army meant little when the militia and its rogue components controlled economic and political space. Further, Sadr’s pledge not to fight for a month was most likely another attempt to disassociate himself from the increasing number of rogue Mahdi Army components that no longer heeded his direction.

Intelligence leaders in the US agreed that al-Sadr did not appear to want to engage US led forces in Baghdad at that time. CIA director Michael V. Hayden told the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence on January 18, “And to the degree that [Sadr] controls Jaish al-Mahdi – and that’s a very important factor – to the degree that he controls this, he’s trying not to bait us or confront us into confrontation.” Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency Lt. Gen. Michael D. Maples also said, “[Jaish al-Mahdi] will probably reduce their level of activity in the near term in order to see what’s going to happen, how it’s going to happen, particularly in Baghdad. And I think they will continue to operate in other parts of Iraq to further establish their influence over the Shia population.”

Maples also warned that a US troop surge in Baghdad to tactically counter the Mahdi Army’s dominance did not address the ability of localized cells – many not answering to Sadr – to gain control of economic and political space outside of the capital. In Kirkuk and Mosul, for example, there was evidence that the minority Shi’a residents relied on the Mahdi for protection and supported their presence.

On January 21 al-Sadr’s 30 deputies and 6 cabinet ministers returned to the government and he stood down his militia. Sadr clearly had more to gain from rejoining the government and letting US led forces go after rogue members of the Mahdi Army that did not answer to him. His choice in the context of the Bush strategy in Baghdad had the potential to preserve his personal influence in Iraq as well as his loyalists in the militia. Further, by standing down his militia, he ensured that the US surge would focus its efforts on Sunni insurgents in the capital.
Internal Shi’ite Divisions: 2003-2007

Shi’ite splits are possible, as are sectarian and ethnic splits. Moreover, few Shi’ites can forget that Sadr is believed to have been responsible for the assassination of Al Khoi right after the fall of Saddam Hussein and for the killing of Muhammad Bakr al-Hakim, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim’s brother, in August 2003.

Shi’ite divisions could occur along regional and local lines as well. Basra was effectively taken over by a local government after the January 30, 2005 election that was much more of a Shi’ite fundamentalist government than the mainstream of al Dawa or SCIRI. The local police were intimidated or pushed aside by such elements in May, and Shi’ite militia joined the police and dominated its ranks.

While some of those accused of being involved – such as police Chief Lt. Colonel Salam Badran --were affiliated with SCIRI in the past, most such “Islamists” seem more fundamentalist than SCIRI’s leadership. There have been reports of threats, beatings, and killings affecting liquor stores, male doctors who treat women, and even barbers cutting hair in “non-Islamic” ways. Individuals in plain clothes have also made threats and put pressure on local businesses.

Sadr's Council for Vice and Virtue launched at least one attack on secular students in Basra for having a mixed picnic. Even if such cases do not divide Iraq’s Arab Shi’ites – and serious issues do exist about how “Islamic” the future government should be in Shi’ite terms and who should rule – they may well cause even greater fear among Sunnis and increase the risk of civil conflict.

Divisions among Shi’ite groups could put new burdens on Iraq’s forces, and/or potentially paralyze or divide key elements of the government. It is not clear if Sadr and other Shi’ite elements will hold together, or if splits will occur. The risk also exists that the Kurds and Shi’ites might split in ways that could lead to civil conflict or that Shi’ite politics may begin to react far more violently to Sunni insurgent bombings and attacks, striking back at the Sunnis rather than seeking to include them.

Such a split could lead to a violent conflict between Sadr’s Mahdi Militia and SCIRI’s Badr Brigade, as each command 10,000 strong militias and many of the Iraqi forces that have been infiltrated by militias are divided along those lines. Yet if the divisions increase peacefully and politically, it may create an opportunity for Sunni parties to gain ground in a government now dominated by a grand Shi’ite alliance. There were indications in March 2006 that divisions within the United Iraqi Alliance over the nomination of al-Jaafari as Prime Minister were creating intra-party tensions. His selection as prime minister, which he secured only with the help of Sadr supporters in parliament, became more contentious as US officials openly voiced preferences for an alternative candidate and Sunni and Kurdish parties aligned in opposition to his nomination.

In April, a senior Shi’ite politician, Kassim Daoud, called for al-Jaafari to step down. One day later, Sheik Jalaladeen al-Sagheir, a deputy to the SCIRI’s leader Abul-Aziz al-Hakim, declared that he was officially suggesting another candidate to replace al-Jaafari.

Although the differences between the al-Sadr and al-Hakim and their respective Sh’ite parties became visible during talks to form a government, the conflict has historical and tribal roots extending thousands of years into the past. Al-Sadr, who through his support for current Prime...
Minister al-Jaafari identifies with the al-Dawa party, has rallied a destitute youthful base through his often fiery rhetoric. His family name, al-Sadr, is held in high regard in the Shi’ite south. The al-Hakim clan, equally well known and ruthless, is often portrayed as a wiser “old guard” that founded SCIRI, the largest political party in Iraq. The leader of the party, Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim, opposes al-Jaafari as the prime minister and therefore openly competes with al-Sadr for the loyalty of Iraqi Shi’ites.\textsuperscript{1674}

While the Hakim family largely fled to Iran during Saddam’s rule, and thus is accused by al-Sadr of being an Iranian creation and subject to Iranian influence, SCIRI has more or less worked with the US and Coalition forces. In addition, SCIRI is much more of a formal political organization than al-Sadr’s movement. Although both families suffered under Saddam, al-Sadr argues that those who escaped to surrounding countries to avoid repression should not be allowed to represent the Iraqi people in a new government.\textsuperscript{1675}

Al-Sadr however, has continually called for the US to leave Iraq and has openly fought with Coalition forces in the past. As stated above, al-Sadr’s Mahdi Army and its affiliates have been more “grass roots based” and continue to reach out to poor and displaced Shi’ites by providing security and basic services, and thus have a large following in and around Sadr City.\textsuperscript{1676}

Al-Sadr, whose age is officially unknown, is said to generally lack religious credentials. Yet historically members of both the al-Sadr and al-Hakim families have held the title of grand ayatollah. In addition, Sadr’s grandfather was particularly known for his religious scholarship. Moreover, marriage has and does occur across tribal lines.\textsuperscript{1677}

In March 2006, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani also announced his dissension with al-Sadr’s growing leadership. Up until that point al-Sistani had continually issued statements beseeching Shi’ites to remain calm in the face of sectarian violence. The Ayatollah’s aides announced that he was disappointed that Shi’a were ignoring his calls for peace and switching their allegiance to al-Sadr’s Madhi army. The aides attested that al-Sistani’s power had been significantly depleted and he most likely lacked the power to prevent a civil war. Al-Sistani’s calls for patience angered many Shi’ites who came to him seeking revenge killings as friends and family died in the ongoing sectarian conflict. A student at Baghdad University testified that he switched his allegiance to al-Sadr after the Ayatollah told him that he could not revenge the killing of his brother; two days later al-Sadr’s army had killed nine of the Sunni’s responsible for his brother’s killing. Al-Sistani’s anger and disappointment engendered his statement; “I will not be a political leader anymore. I am only happy to receive questions about religious matters.” US army officials recognize the change as a loss to moderacy efforts in Iraq.\textsuperscript{1678}

It was also clear that by mid-2006, Islamist groups in the Sh’ite south were enforcing strict interpretations of Islamic law. This often resulted in threats or intimidation against those who were reluctant to follow these rules. Union’s and mixed-gender gatherings were broken up and freedom of speech at universities and within political parties was restricted.\textsuperscript{1679}

For example, the sale of liquor was banned as were “public amusements deemed un-Islamic.” The Transportation Ministry, controlled by al-Sadr supporters, dismantled a transport workers union and transferred its workers. One of two individuals, who quit the main Shi’ite political party after being labeled as a traitor in public, recanted his views.\textsuperscript{1680}

Academics and secular political activists frequently claim that they are followed and harassed by the police of government agencies. One Basra University professor who advocated better
relations with the US was labeled an infidel, and his son was kidnapped for a $15,000 dollar ransom.1681

Much of this was not necessarily instituted by rogue gangs or Islamist militias, but rather from elected officials. While some decried the curtailed freedoms, others clearly were able to liberty for security and stability. “If you give me a choice and say, ‘Go live in Baghdad, with all its explosions,’ I would pick here,” Basra resident Hasemia Moshen Hossein said.1682

The erosion of democracy and a simultaneous increase in violent attacks, including a suicide bomber which killed 32 and wounded 77 at a marketplace, prompted the new prime minister al-Maliki to declare a state of emergency in Basra in early June.1683 The murder rate of May (85) was triple that of January.1684

According to a New York Times article, the violence was the result of a fight between Shi’ite political parties and militias for control of the local government and oil resources. This resulted in 174 deaths between April and May, twice the amount from the two months prior.1685

Upon arriving in the city, al-Maliki announced that Iraqi army troops would be deployed to the region and be responsible for security. “Security comes first, second, and third,” said al-Maliki. The British, who were in control of Basra at the time, were not informed of this decision prior to it being made public.1686

With US forces focusing on the insurgency in the central and eastern portions of Iraq, the Shi’ite south had largely been left to its own devices and was allowed to self-govern. Brig. James Everard characterized the situation: “Freedom of speech, freedom of expression: it just hasn’t quite worked out the way it was planned. They’re not prepared to debate. They tend to do things at the end of a gun.” One of the sources of this violence was the large number of militias and militia members, wielded by local political leaders for their own ends. The city’s 15,000-man police force was double its authorized side.1687 The situation on the streets was frequently referred to as “turf wars” or mafia style rule.1688

For example, Muhammad al-Waeli, the governor of Basra, was a member of the religious Fahdila Party that dominated the provincial council and maintained close relations with al-Sadr.1689 SCIRI, holding the minority of seats in that council, sought to remove him since he was appointed, but political efforts to do so were futile.1690

Although federalism was a core component of disagreement between the various Shi’ite political factions, the potential for enormous wealth from oil exports for whatever party emerged dominant led to fierce and violent competition. The ruling party at the time, the Fahdila Party, controlled the security forces charged with guarding the oil business and its detractors said that Fahdila leaders used their control of this sector to profit personally. The fact that almost all politicians were engaged in at least some corruption however, made it difficult for any side to press too hard on the issue.1691

Power struggles between warring Shi’ite factions became more frequent in the Shi’ite-dominated South in the summer of 2006. On August 16, Iraqi security officers raided the office of radical cleric Mahmoud Sarkhi al-Hassani after his followers reportedly tried to assume control of several districts in Karbala. Razouki, a senior official of another Shi’ite group, known as the Fadhila party, accused al-Hassani’s followers of planning to take over religious shrines in the city. The clashes between al-Hassani’s followers and Iraqi security forces led to the arrest of 281
members, but al-Hassani’s followers later gathered in nearby towns and threatened to march on Karbala.\textsuperscript{1692}

Rival Shi’ite factions, such as Sadr’s Mahdi Army and Fadhila’s armed wing, increasingly engaged in open armed conflicts in Basra. In June, hundreds of al-Hassani’s followers attacked the Iranian Consulate after another Shi’ite cleric criticized al-Hassani on Iranian television, describing him as a “fake cleric,” and a “pawn of Israel.” Prime Minister al-Maliki declared a state of emergency in Basra and deployed several thousand troops to crack down on the militias with an “iron fist.”\textsuperscript{1693}

On August 16, supporters of Sheik Faisal, the leader of the Shi’ite Beni Assad tribe, stormed the governor’s office in Basra accusing his supporters of assassinating their tribal leader. They blamed the rival Shi’ite Fadhila party of coordinating the attack, and demanded that the governor, who was also a member of the Fadhila party, arrest and hand over the killers. Sheik Faisal, the leader of the Shi’ite Beni Assad tribe was assassinated by unidentified gunmen two days earlier. His supporters accused the Fadhila party of planning the attack.\textsuperscript{1694}

Just two days after Maliki met with al-Sadr to discuss political answers to the militia problem, the Mahdi Army seized control of Amara, the capital of Maysan province. The incident also stressed the tensions between the Mahdi Army and SCIRI’s Badr Brigade. On October 19, a roadside bomb – attributed to the Mahdi Army - killed the head of police intelligence and member of the Badr Brigade. The officer’s family then kidnapped the brother of a local Mahdi Army leader in retaliation. In response, about 800 Mahdi militiamen seized control of police stations in Amara - exploding three of them - installed checkpoints around the city, and patrolled the streets, ordering residents to stay inside. 15 Iraqis – including four civilians - were killed and at least 60 wounded in the fighting.

The British army left Amara in August to patrol the Iraq – Iran border. Residents in the town reported that since the British left, the militias came back and influenced the police forces and local government. However, witnesses said that Iraqi police forces fought the militias in fierce street battles in attempt to regain their police stations. The fighting was eventually controlled when roughly 230 British Troops returned to Amara. In addition, Prime Minister Maliki sent an emergency security delegation of top officials to make sure the situation did not escalate further.\textsuperscript{1695} Al-Sadr also sent a delegation to the city, which broadcast messages from the cleric telling militiamen to lay down arms, but witnesses said the call for calm was unheeded.\textsuperscript{1696}

The incident underscored the size and power of the Mahdi Army in southern Iraq, as well as Sadr’s inability to control his militia. The exact size of the Mahdi Army remained unknown in the early fall, but simultaneous fighting in Baghdad, Balad, and Amara left little doubt about the militia’s role in propagating the civil war. The smaller Badr Brigade had taken a backseat in the fighting by the early fall of 2006, but the reprisal attack against the Mahdi Army showed that the military wing of SCIRI was not about to cede power to rogue Mahdi militiamen. Sunni tribes talking of fighting Al-Qa’ida insurgents in Anbar and revenge killings between the Mahdi Army and the Badr Brigade brought about the possibility of intra-sect wars within the larger civil war.

The Shi’ite community was increasingly divided along party and militia lines, although the individual parties had their own divisions by leader and many elements of the militias operated on their own or outside any clear central hierarchy controlled by the party leadership.
In late December 2006 the Washington Post reported on the growing power of the Mahdi Army over the Badr Brigade. In the Baghdad neighborhood of Karrada, the Badr Brigade was once the primary protector of the upscale Shi’ite residents. However, in the working class section the Mahdi Army was increasingly seen as the principal security force. When al-Hakim joined the government in 2005 and more recently in late 2006 traveled to Washington to talk with President Bush, many Shi’ites saw him as propping up the US led “occupation.” After a series of insurgent attacks and lack of a US timeline for withdrawal, many Shi’ites in Karrada switched their allegiance to the Mahdi Army.

Sadr’s militia did not hold as much power and prestige as it did in other Shi’ite strongholds, such as Sadr City, but the power and credibility of SCIRI and the Badr Brigade was noticeably waning. In mosques where SCIRI leaders and Ayatollah Sistani’s portraits hung, Moqtada al-Sadr’s and his father’s pictures joined them in 2006. Mahdi militiamen created “popular protection committees” to watch over blocks, just as they did in Sadr City. Older Shi’ites in Karrada still saw Ayatollah Sistani as the leader of Shi’ites and heeded his calls for calm, but the Mahdi Army had clearly grown in appeal to the younger generation of Shi’ites.1697

A report by the Crisis Group stated that the unity between Shi’ite militias was strong in Baghdad, but in southern Iraq power disputes repeatedly turned violent. In Najaf the struggle between Shi’ite groups was over symbolic control of the holy city, but in Basra it was over the control of resources, primarily oil.1698 It was, however, impossible to generalize about the nature and motivations of armed groups.

The two rival Shi’ite groups clashed again in late December in the southern city of Samawah in Shi’ite controlled Muthanna Province. The Los Angeles Times reported that police in Samawah, most of whom were loyal to SCIRI, were fighting a renegade branch of the Mahdi Army. The conflict started on December 1 when several Mahdi gunmen tried to break into a local prison and killed three people in the process. A ceasefire was signed, but fighting broke out against three weeks later. In the latter violence, nine people were killed, including four policemen and the Iraqi Army had to be called in to help.

The local police force blamed the violence on the renegade Mahdi militiamen, but a representative from Sadr’s office in Muthanna said that police had opened fire on some Shi’ite worshipers loyal to Sadr. Sadr’s office in Baghdad stated that the militiamen were led by rogue cleric Sheik Ghazi Zurgani and it appeared that Sadr was distancing himself from the Samawah militia. A spokesman for the Mahdi Army in Samawah said that the militiamen would not stop fighting until the local police released 30 detained militia members.

A member of the Samawah city council explained that local Shi’ites had gradually become divided by tribe and political affiliation; those who supported Sadr’s bloc and those who supported SCIRI. The governor of Muthanna province, a SCIRI member, said that the situation was under control, although tensions would clearly erupt again in the future.

The incident underscored the divisions among the Shi’ite community and added another layer to the complex cycle of violence in Iraq. Although Iraqi security forces appeared to regain control of the situation, it was a setback for the first province to gain provincial authority. About 800 Australian soldiers remained in Muthanna to “keep an eye on the situation.”1699
Death Squads and Mystery Killings

There were more and more reports of revenge killing and anti-Sunni strikes by both the Shi‘ite militias and Shi‘ite elements in the security forces and police during the rest of 2005, and stronger indications that Shi‘ite militias were playing a growing role in Iraq’s low-level civil war. There are credible reports that hundreds of Sunni bodies have been found in locations like rivers, desert roads, open desert, sewage disposal facilities, and garbage dumps since the new government was formed that April.

The Baghdad morgue reported growing numbers of corpses with their hands bound by police handcuffs, and that it processed 7,553 corpses between January and September 2005, versus only 5,239 for the same period in 2004. Sunni groups like the Moslem Scholars Association have published pictures of such corpses and lists of the dead, and have stated there are Shi‘ite death squads. The Inspector General of the Ministry of the Interior, General Nori said, “There are such groups operating -- yes this is correct.” In November, a raid on a secret MOI detention facility in southeastern Baghdad, which was operated by former members of the Badr Brigade, was linked to the death of 18 detainees reported to have died under torture. Some 220 men were held in filthy conditions within this prison and many were subjected to torture.

Minister of Interior Jabr denied any government involvement, and said that if MOI security forces and police uniforms and cars have been seen, they were stolen. Other sources, however, confirmed that some of the killings of an estimated 700 Sunnis between August and November 2005 involved men who identified themselves as Ministry of Interior forces. This increased the risk that Iraqi forces could be divided by factions, decreasing their effectiveness and leading to the disintegration of Iraqi forces if Iraq were to descend into full-scale civil war.

The killing of at least 14 Sunnis could be clearly traced to MOI arrest records several weeks earlier. US sources also noted that a large number of members of the Badr Organization had joined the MOI forces, including the police and commando units, since the new government was formed in April 2003. The lines between some MOI units and the Badr Organization were becoming increasingly blurred.

During the winter of 2005 and 2006, body dumps became a favored tactic by insurgents and militias. Although this trend existed long before the February 22 Askariya bombing, it increased thereafter and became part of the cyclical sectarian violence carried out by Shi‘ites and Sunnis. It would be almost impossible to catalogue all of the discoveries, but finding ten to twenty corpses at one site was not uncommon and each day usually resulted in at least one “body dump” being reported. For example, in the period from March 7 until March 21, over 191 bodies were found.

Common characteristics could be found within these “mystery killings.” Increasingly, the victims were relatively ordinary Shi‘ites or Sunnis and were not directly working for the government of Coalition forces. Often times victims were taken from their homes or businesses in daylight by masked gunmen or men wearing police or security force uniforms and driving standard issue trucks. These attributes, and the fact that the bodies were almost always found in the same condition-- blindfolded, handcuffed, and shot in the head showing signs of torture-- lent credibility to the claim that many of the killings were perpetrated by Shi‘ite militias themselves, or elements of security forces dominated by these militias.

The frequency of “extra-judicial killings” was discussed in a UN Human Rights Report and linked to police forces: “A large number of extrajudicial killings, kidnappings and torture were
据报道，这些暴力事件主要是由武装民兵组织所引起的，这些民兵组织成员来自政治派别或黑帮。这些方法通常被用来进行电子风格的谋杀：大规模逮捕不带司法授权和非司法处决。尸体之后被发现，身上有被折磨的迹象，并且被一枪击毙。

巴格达是一个“混合”城市，是这种暴力事件的中心。2006年头三个月，巴格达的伊拉克平民死亡人数比自萨达姆政权结束以来的任何时候都要多。在这三个月中，3,800名伊拉克平民被杀害，其中大部分被发现是被绑住的，头被打死，并且身上有被折磨的迹象。1704年5月，巴格达太平间平均每天接收40具尸体。美国匿名官员透露，针对逊尼派的软性宗教清洗的杀人事件比汽车炸弹的加起来多9倍，而执行性谋杀在2月清真寺爆炸案后9周内增加了86%。1705

什叶派和库尔德认为这些民兵组织是反叛组织的重要帮助。相反，逊尼派认为民兵组织，尤其是巴德组织、马迪军、警察和被这些民兵组织控制的特殊安全力量，杀害、恐吓和主持其他犯罪。这种分歧导致了不断上升的紧张关系和分歧，导致了逊尼派和什叶派之间的复仇杀戮。

民兵组织据称在伊拉克过渡委员会颁布的临时政府条件下被解散。伊拉克官方声称他们现在名义上归国防部和内政部控制。然而，伊拉克领导人对这些民兵组织实际发挥的作用表示模棱两可。2005年6月初，总理贾法里举行新闻发布会，颂扬库尔德人民军和巴德组织。库尔德总统、库尔德人、贾拉尔·塔拉布尼也参加了新闻发布会，以庆祝巴德组织的成立周年。1707

总统赞扬了他认为的民兵组织的积极贡献，他说：“巴德组织和人民军队是必要的，是为实现这个神圣的任务而设立的，为建立一个民主的、联邦的和独立的伊拉克。’’1708 正如他对民兵组织的控诉，塔拉布尼说，“这是个爱国的群体，它为伊拉克的利益工作，它不会被拖入教派冲突或任何其他类型的斗争。”1709 贾法里甚至称巴德组织为“保护”伊拉克的盾牌。

警察从2004年7月的31,000人增加到2005年7月的95,000人，有时只进行有限的背景调查。在这一过程中，巴德组织和马迪军的许多成员加入到警察队伍中。

** Links to the Iraqi Police and Special Security Forces **

逊尼派和库尔德人认为这些民兵组织是反叛组织的重要帮助，而伊拉克的人认为这些民兵组织正在对伊拉克的和平与稳定造成威胁。

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case of the roughly 65,000 strong mix of MOI and police forces in the greater Baghdad area, the men from the Bader Organization generally tended to go into the MOI special security units and those from the Mahdi Army tended to join the police. While both the Iraqi government and Coalition said the situation was improving, a September 2005 report by the ICG suggested that the process of drafting a constitution had helped exacerbate the existing ethnic and sectarian divisions between Iraqis.  

By late 2005, US officials and military sources were complaining that the MOI and Minister Jabr were not informing them of some MOI and police operations and privately acknowledged that they had observed prisoner abuse. Commenting on the futility of filing reports against the incidents, one US official equated it with “trying to put out a forest fire with a bucket of water.” They expressed particular concern about the actions of the MOI's Maghawir or Fearless Warrior special commando units, and that they were carrying out illegal raids and killings. This 12,000-man force had a number of Sunni officers and had originally been formed under the authority of former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi. Since the new government was formed in April 2005 however, it had recruited larger numbers of new Shi’ite members. Its commander, General Rashid Flaib Mohammed was reported to have acknowledged that the unit had had some problems. Sunni police commanders like Brigadier General Mohammed Ezzawi Hussein Alwann, commander of the Farook Brigade, were also purged from the MOI forces, along with junior officers.

As mentioned above, the discovery of some 200 Sunnis held in horrible conditions in a bunker in Baghdad in November 2005 raised further issues. Many were tortured, and the Special Investigative Unit carrying out the detentions was an MOI unit run by an MOI brigadier general and colonel. The colonel was an intelligence officer said to be reporting directly to Jabr.

While the revelations of large-scale abuses draw the greatest attention, less severe, day-to-day incidents are no less important and can be illustrative of the underlying sectarian tension in Iraq. For example, when several policemen arrived at an Iraqi police station with three suspected insurgents in plastic cuffs, US Sgt. 1st Class Joel Perez had to cut the cuffs because they were too tight and causing the prisoners’ hands to swell and turn blue. Later, one of the Iraqi policeman involved confided in a reporter, “They [the insurgents] need to be beaten up. The Americans wont let us…I want to have two cars and tie each hand to a different car and break them in half.”

This and previous incidents drew comments by both US and Iraqi officials. US military procedure and policy was clarified in a back-and-forth between Secretary Rumsfeld and Joint Chief of Staff Peter Pace when Pace declared, “it’s absolutely the responsibility of every US service member if they see inhumane treatment being conducted to intervene to stop it.” Secretary Rumsfeld countered, “I don’t think you mean they have an obligation to physically stop it; it’s to report it.” Pace respectfully reiterated, “If they are physically present when inhumane treatment is taking place, sir, they have an obligation to stop it.” Putting prisoner abuse in perspective, former Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi commented to a British newspaper “people are doing the same as Saddam’s time and worse.”

In a February 2006 Department of Defense report to Congress, “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq,” police, military and justice detention facilities were singled out as being “typically maintained at higher standards than those of the Ministry of Interior facilities.” The report also suggested that to correct the “imbalance”, joint U.S.-Iraqi “teams will continue to inspect Iraqi
detention facilities, with appropriate remediation through Iraqi-led triage and follow-up logistical, security, public relations, and political support."

At the same time, Sunni Islamic insurgents and some Sunni political figures had every reason to try to implicate the security services. Some of the killings in late November involved key Sunni politicians like Ayad Alizi and Al Hussein, leading members of the Iraqi Islamic Party, a member of the Sunni coalition competing in the December 15th elections. Shi’ites seemed to have little reason to strike at such targets.

At the beginning of 2006 it was clear that accusations of “retaliation killings,” and the implication of Shi’ite-dominated MOI and security forces in acts of violence perpetrated largely against Sunni Arabs, increased sectarian tensions and moved the country closer toward civil war. This had become a prime concern for US Maj. Gen. William G. Webster Jr., who stated during a press briefing that one of the most important focuses of the US military in Iraq in the coming months would be to train Iraqi forces to operate within the rule of law and with respect for human rights. In addition, he called for efforts to promote “a greater ethnic and sectarian balance within those forces” and a “spirit of national service.”

In an attempt to address these concerns, the US has tripled the number of training teams being attached to Iraqi police forces.

Shi’ite and Sunni tensions had an impact on US efforts to develop Iraqi forces as well. In December 2006 the US Army’s 3rd Infantry Division, deployed to Baghdad, had to threaten to demote the readiness rating of an Iraqi Army division scheduled to take over part of the Green Zone and to suspend the transfer of authority indefinitely when Iraq’s Defense Ministry refused to confirm the appointment of Col. Muhammed Wasif Taha, a Sunni. US Col. Ed Cardon, commander of the 3rd infantry’s fourth brigade, defended the decision saying, “The hand-over was contingent upon their leadership remaining where it was.” Although the Defense Ministry eventually capitulated and confirmed Taha as the commander of the brigade, a spokesman for the ministry indicated that it still had the right to replace Taha at a later date.

Abuse of power by Shi’ite-dominated security forces also presented new problems in the south. In the predominately Shi’ite city of Basra, British troops arrested 14 Iraqi law enforcement officials, including two senior police intelligence officers, in late January 2006. While several were released, the British reported those that remained in custody, including the deputy chief of intelligence for Basra, had been involved in political corruption, assassinations and bomb-making.

Local Iraqi officials denounced what they viewed as excessively “random arrests” and threatened to suspend relations with British forces until the men were released. Maj. Peter Cripps, a British military spokesman in Basra, defended the arrests saying that those arrested “were all part of the former internal affairs department that was disbanded by the Ministry of Interior and are now in the criminal intelligence unit and the serious crimes unit. They are alleged to be following their own agenda including, corruption, assassinations and persecutions of citizens.”

The British cited the role of militias in the security forces as one of the factors that contributed to the decline of the security situation in Basra, where murder rates doubled to more than one per day between November 2005 and February 2006. The Basra police chief stated that more than half of the 12,000 member forces were militia members and that he could only trust a quarter of his officers. British efforts to instil humane treatment techniques in local police and teach them
forensic investigative methods were frustrated by the release of a video showing British soldiers beating a group of young, unarmed Iraqi boys.  

The growing distrust between the British and certain parts of the new police force resulted in UK troops being asked to leave when they arrived for a meeting at a Basra station to discuss equipment and professional development. The Iraqi officer, who instructed them to do so, said he had received a call from his superior who threatened his job if he allowed the British to enter.  

Tensions between British troops and Shi‘ites in Basra flared again in May when a British helicopter crashed in a populated area. When British soldiers arrived on the scene they were pelted with rocks and even Molotov cocktails from demonstrators, estimated to be around 300, cheering the wrecked Lynx helicopter. During the clash, five Iraqis were several British troops were injured.  

Although initial reports did not rule on the cause of the crash, in subsequent days British intelligence indicated that it was likely a surface-to-air missile, possibly with Iranian origins. British officials said that a splinter group of the Mahdi Army, backed by fundamentalist in Iran, was responsible for the violence that followed when soldiers arrived to rescue any survivors of the crash. Intelligence sources also indicated that there are groups that have broken off from the Mahdi Army and are no longer under the control of al-Sadr, but are rather being supplied and funded by terror groups from within Iran. This caused Lt. Gen. Sir Rob Fry, deputy commander of all multi-national forces in Iraq, to assert that if the Iraqi government failed to take control of the militias in Basra, than British troops would be used to clear them out.  

In the early months of 2006, these allegations led to investigations. In February, enough evidence and outcry had accumulated to force the MOI to launch an investigation into allegations it was supporting death squads. This investigation however focused only on one incident in which 22 Iraqi police were briefly detained by US authorities on their way to kill a Sunni prisoner in their custody.  

This event led to the first public acknowledgement by the MOI that death squads operated within its own department and the ministry of defense. During a press conference in March, Bayan Jabr, Minster of the Interior said, “The death squads that we have captured are in the defense and interior ministries…There are people who have infiltrated the army and the interior.”  

Only one month later however, Jabr made a statement to the contrary. In April he said that these death squads were members of private security forces, not government forces. He said that such private companies employ 180,000 security agents, many of whom “are uniformed like the police, their cars like the police.” Similarly, he stated, “[t]errorists or someone who supports the terrorists...are using the clothes of the police or the military.” In May, he reiterated this claim, but upped the number of private security agents to 200,000.  

There was evidence to support this. Police uniforms, insignia and equipment were available at some markets. Reportedly, patches with the emblem of the Iraqi police, “IP,” were available for as little as 35 cents and entire uniforms could be purchased for $13.50.  

Regardless, the immediate problem for the Iraqi government became controlling elements of the ISF whose loyalties were clearly not with the national government, and moreover trying to get these groups to uphold the law rather than engage in or tacitly allow violence. For example, after a public warning issued on April 7 by the MOI telling Iraqis not to gather in crowded areas because of specific intelligence indicating a series of car bombs were likely, it had to similarly
warn ISF not to impede this order. The ministry threatened legal action against “any security official who fails to take the necessary procedures to foil any terrorist attack in his area.”

In what may have been the largest incident at the time involving MOI security forces, in early March gunmen wearing MOI uniforms allegedly stormed a Sunni owned security firm and abducted 50 of its employees. The Interior Ministry denied its involvement in the event. Later in the same month, investigators discovered and broke up a group of police who ran a kidnapping and extortion ring. Allegedly led by an Iraqi police major general, this group kidnapped individuals, sometimes killing them, and forced their families to pay ransoms that they then pocketed. In April, the bodies of three young men were recovered from a sewage ditch. According to co-workers, the three were last seen being arrested by MOI forces after their minibus had been pulled over. In May, two employees of the al-Nahrain television station were kidnapped on their way home by MOI forces according to witnesses. Their bodies were found the next day, along with six other Sunni men. All had been blindfolded, burned with cigarette butts and severely beaten.

Although the MOI continued to deny that it had any role in the increased sectarian violence since the February shrine bombing, accusations mounted and the accumulation of incidents made this denial more difficult. The consistency and continuation of “body dumps”, the corpses often exhibiting signs of torture and shot execution style, and strings of abductions in which the gunmen wore ISF uniforms, furthered tension between al-Jaafari and the US who had been pressuring the Prime Minister to rein in the militias. The fear generated within the Sunni community by the merging of Shi’ite militias and ISF was illustrated by an advisory on a Sunni-run television network, which told its viewers not to allow Iraqi police or soldiers into their homes unless US troops were present.

For some Sunnis, the presence of US forces provided a degree of assurance against abuses of power by Iraqi security forces. In Dora, local leaders agreed that Iraqi forces could only conduct raids in mosques if US soldiers accompanied them. This same rule was later implemented in Baghdad as well. The fact that Sunnis requested the presence of US troops in Islamic holy places during searches, something that earlier would have been inconceivable, was a testament to the depth of sectarian divides and the genuine distrust between the Shi’ite dominated police forces and Sunni communities. As Ali Hassan, a Sunni, bluntly stated, “We prefer to be detained by Americans instead of Iraqis. Second choice would be the Iraqi army. Last choice, Iraqi police.”

In late March, the US administration openly voiced its disapproval of al-Jaafari as the next prime minister. Ambassador Khalilzad added that due to his lack of leadership, Shi’ite-led militias were now killing more Iraqis than the Sunni insurgency.

Al-Jaafari’s response, which warned the US not to interfere with the democratic process in Iraq, addressed the issue of Shi’ite militias being incorporated in the security forces and his political alliance with al-Sadr, whose support put him in office. He stated that he favored engaging with Sadr and his followers instead of isolating him and that he viewed the militias as part of Iraq’s “de facto reality.” He continued to voice support for a government that looks past sectarian differences and to work toward integrating the militias into the police and army.

In April, Iraq’s Interior Minister Jabr refused to deploy any of the thousands of police recruits trained by the joint US-UK Civilian Police Assistance Training Team (CPATT). Although
graduates of this program had been available for over three months, Jabr chose to hire those trained outside of the program because he said he had no control over CPATT’s selection process. The US was concerned that this was an attempt by the minister to sustain the sectarian makeup of the forces and continue to incorporate those with allegiance to the Badr Brigade into its ranks.1740

The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq’s Human Rights Report specifically highlighted the threat of militias within the security forces and that it had received information “regarding the actions of some segments of the security forces, in particular the police and special forces, and their apparent collusion with militias in carrying out human rights violations.”1741

There were concerns that even Iraqi brigades that were “mixed,” in that they struck a balance between Shi‘ites and Sunnis within their ranks, were still overwhelmingly Shi‘ite. There were reports of at least one soldier who was proudly wearing an al-Sadr t-shirt under his Army uniform. In interviews as well, many of the soldiers privately confided that if they were ever asked to fight the Mahdi Army, they would have to quit the Iraqi forces.1742 Brig. Gen. Abdul Kareem Abdul Rahman al-Yusef, a Sunni admitted that his brigade was 87% Shi‘ite and included members of the Badr Organization. Despite this, he still believed that “it’s not the time to ask the militias to put down their arms,” given that the government cannot provide security to its citizens.1743

As Lt. Co. Chris Pease, deputy commander of the US military’s police training programs in eastern Baghdad put it, “We’re not stupid. We know for a fact that they’re killing people. We dig the damn bodies out of the sewer all of the time. But there’s a difference between knowing something and proving something.” Capt. Ryan Lawrence, an intelligence officer with the 25th Brigade Special Police Transition Team, displayed similar feelings, “Training and equipping a force, while knowing that at least some element is infiltrated by militias, is a difficult situation.”1744

Pease also admitted that an Iraqi police officer had confided in him the reality and extent of the militia infiltration into ISF. “His assessment was that the militias are everywhere,” Pease said, “and his officers weren’t going to do anything about that because their units are infiltrated and they know what the cost would be for working against the militias.”1745

Although US troops can and do accompany developing Iraqi units on raids to ensure proper treatment of detainees, as Iraqi’s increasingly take the lead and missions are based on Iraqi intelligence, the line between counterinsurgency and revenge can become blurry for Coalition soldiers. After a joint U.S.-Iraqi raid in March in which 10 Sunnis were rounded up, one US colonel remembered thinking immediately after, “Wait a sec, were we just part of some sort of sectarian revenge?”1746

Indeed, many of the soldiers who were on their second tour in Iraq returned to a different war. Whereas before the focus was on the Sunni insurgency, it now was about containing the Shi‘ite militias and preventing further infiltration into the security forces.1747

While details were still uncertain, events of a two-day fire fight in the Adhamiyah district, a Sunni neighborhood, indicated the possibility that a local Sunni militia had taken up arms against what it saw as an attack by a Shi‘ite “death squad” disguised as a police force. In the process, some locals remarked that the Sunni dominated Army, responding with the US to engage “insurgents,” actually fired on the incoming police forces.1748

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The Iraqi government denied claims that Interior Ministry forces had been involved. Rather it suggested that insurgent groups, portraying themselves as police and security forces, provoked the violence. It specifically identified those groups as the Islamic Army of Iraq, the 1920 Revolution Brigades and al-Qa'ida. While the government claims could not be verified, al-Qa'ida in Iraq did issue a statement promising “a new raid to avenge the Sunnis at Adhamiyah and the other areas, and the raid will start with the dawn of Wednesday, if God wishes...The Shiite areas will be an open battlefield for us.”

While it was not clear if Shi’ite police forces were even present, or if the Army was mistaken for a police force as suggested by US claims, the event illustrated a growing distrust between Sunnis and Iraqi Security Forces. The threat from Shi’ite death squads, whether real or perceived, caused the town to arm themselves, coordinate action, and attempt to repel the invading police forces.

Throughout the summer of 2006 increased joint US and Iraqi troops patrols swept Baghdad in an attempt to combat the insurgency and convince Shiite militias – those believed to have infiltrated the MOI and those operating outside of the government – that militias were no longer necessary to provide security. US commanders said in September that they remained primarily concerned with al-Sadr's Madhi army. However, US officials stated that the Badr Brigade, the armed component of SCIRI, retained a strong presence in the police forces and may have been responsible for operating anti-Sunni death squads. US Army Maj. Gen. Joseph Peterson, the commander of the US police training mission in Iraq, reported in early September that none of the Shiite militia members captured in “extrajudicial killings” were linked to the MOI. However, the US military commented that their public addresses were diluted to facilitate political discussions with Shi’ite militias. Thus, it remained nearly impossible to determine the extent of militia infiltration into MOI forces.

In the early fall, Sunnis accused Shi’ite lawmakers of allowing continued militia infiltration into the ISF. The government reacted strongly in one case of police complacency amid sectarian attacks, and shuffled ISF commanders who were suspected of militia ties.

In the north central Baghdad neighborhood of Tobji evidence existed that the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) was still infiltrated by militias. Rising sectarian violence led the Shi’ite majority in the mixed neighborhood to erect barriers at the entrances. Many of the Shi’ites decided to join the Mahdi army for protection against Sunni insurgents. At the checkpoints into Tobji, Mahdi army members checked ID cards and searched Sunni residents with whom they had lived in peace for decades. In an interview, one of the Mahdi army militiamen standing guard showed his Iraqi Interior Ministry ID card, showing his real name and police commando unit, the Wolf Brigade, which was widely believed by Sunnis to carry out extrajudicial attacks. Maliki’s government hesitated to confront Shi’ite militias, fearing the political repercussions, but the evidence from Tobji was most likely not an isolated incident.

Shi’ite politicians loyal to Moqtada al-Sadr or SCIRI supported their respective militias and intimidated Iraqi police into allowing the armed groups to control the streets. Militia members routinely threatened police officers into allowing them to pass through checkpoints. But it became clear that Shi’ite politicians were also contributing to the intimidation. Mithal Alusi, a secular Shi’ite legislator, said that politicians with militia links talked directly with police commanders to allow the militias to gain control. Alusi said that police and army commanders complained that whenever they tried to attack militias in Baghdad they would receive a call from...
top Iraqi politicians telling them to allow the militias to operate. The commanders felt trapped between US officials who urged ISF to take on the militias and Iraqi politicians who could fire them if they did not comply.  

The exact level of militia infiltration into ministry of interior forces was still difficult to discern in the fall of 2006. Militias could easily acquire police uniforms and equipment on the black market or through intimidation. US and Iraqi troops often found government issued weapons or badges at attack sites. But the Ministry of Interior publicly denied a role in all militia attacks. The problem was more that police failed to hinder militia attacks and let militiamen through checkpoints. Sunnis, however, asserted that security forces played a more active role in militia attacks.

In one incident on October 1, gunmen kidnapped 26 workers from a refrigerated food factory in western Baghdad. The kidnapped workers were mostly Sunnis. Police found ten of the bodies dumped in Baghdad the following day. The US military attributed the kidnappings to Shi’ite militias. Iraq’s largest Sunni party, the Iraqi Islamic Party, questioned the ministry of interior about how victims from west Baghdad could get to the city center without being stopped at checkpoints. Sunnis charged Iraqi police with tolerating militias and in some cases, even helping them get by checkpoints.

The following day in an unrelated incident a joint US and Iraqi raid in Baghdad uncovered a torture chamber. Inside, soldiers found MOI badges and saw a policeman outside the compound before they entered. The blood-soaked chamber housed numerous instruments of torture, but no prisoners. On the walls the militiamen had plastered pictures of Moqtada al-Sadr. It was impossible to know if police used the compound, but it reinforced Sunni distrust of Iraq’s security forces.

Iraq’s interior minister said that the majority of death squad members caught by US and Iraqi forces had no ties to the government. The small number that did work for the interior ministry was part of the Facilities Protection Service (FPS). FBS is a large force of 150,000 guards, but has little governmental oversight. The Washington Post also reported, “US military commanders acknowledge that the agency has mushroomed to more than 140,000, largely outside American notice. A top former U.S. military commander has said militia fighters under the Facilities Protection Service are tied to kidnappings, execution-style killings and other crimes.”

On November 14, 2006 the largest mass kidnapping occurred since the US led invasion in 2003. Between 100 and 150 employees and visitors at the Sunni controlled Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Scholarships and Cultural Relations Directorate in the downtown Karradah district were kidnapped by about 80 gunmen. The Ministry was responsible for granting scholarships to professors and students wishing to study abroad. Witnesses said that the gunmen were dressed in police uniforms and cordoned off the street before they passed by four guards. The operation only took 15 minutes and the kidnappers locked the woman into one room in the building and then separated out the males into Sunni and Shi’ites. But the Higher Education Minister said that both Sunnis and Shi’ites were kidnapped. He also announced that classes at Universities would be suspended until further notice to protect professors and students.
Government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh did acknowledge that the mass abduction was the work of militiamen who had infiltrated the interior ministry and were carrying out "organized" killings. Fourteen of the abductees were released unharmed the same day, but at least 40 were still held. The Interior Ministry swiftly announced that five police chiefs were being held for questioning in the incident. Previous sectarian violence had pointed to the infiltration of the MOI by Shi’ite militias, but Higher Education kidnapping proved the validity of Sunni accusations so strongly that it even surprised most Iraqis. Iraq's leading Sunni clerics' organization, the Muslim Scholars' Association, said in a statement,” This cowardly act confirms what we have always warned and we blame the government and the interior ministry for this crime.”1759

**Iraqi Government Efforts to “Solve” the Militia Problem**

The election of Nouri al-Maliki as the next Prime Minister broke the major, but hardly the only, impasse in forming a new government. The US and others hoped that because he was not as closely associated with al-Sadr as al-Jaafari was, that he would have a freer hand in reigning in the militias, creating an ethnically and sectarian balanced military and police forces with a national spirit.

In late April, Maliki pledged that his government would begin the process of funneling the militias into Iraq’s security forces. This was reinforced by a statement by the usually reticent Grand Ayatollah Sistani in which he declared, “Weapons must be in the hands of government security forces that should not be tied to political parties but to the nation.”1760 He added further, that Iraqi Security Forces must be formed “on sound, patriotic bases so that their allegiance shall be to the homeland alone, not to any other political or other groups.”1761

In Maliki’s first meeting with al-Sadr as the Iraq’s new Prime Minister, he broached the issue of disbanding the militias gently saying, “Merging the militias into the military is not to disrespect them but to reward them for their role in the struggle against dictatorship.” He also said it was a “solution to the problem of having weapons outside the government.”1762 Yet during a news conference after the meeting, the young cleric did not address the issue of disbanding the Mahdi Army, but rather focused his comments on the Rice-Rumsfeld visit to the region and the presence of US troops.1763

In May, Iraqi leaders debated putting all of Iraq’s police and interior security forces in the capital under a “unified command,” rather than have them divided between various ministries. The goal of this re-arrangement was to curb sectarian divisions within the forces, diminish the presence of Coalition forces on the streets, and to instill confidence in Iraq’s citizens and send a message that the Iraqi government was capable of bringing security to Baghdad. The logic behind such a move was summed up by Vice President Adel Abdul Mahdi, “No one knows who is who right now – we have tens of thousands of forces. We need a unified force to secure Baghdad: same uniform, same patrol car, one commander.”1764

Many still remained skeptical of the plan, emphasizing that simply restructuring the forces by putting them all together would do little to solve the internal sectarian divides or diminish the presence of militias and death squads within the forces. For some U.S advisors and diplomats in Iraq, a “big-bang” solution seemed unlikely to solve the problems plaguing Iraq’s security forces. These same officials assessed that it was not so much about the structure or command of the forces, but Iraqi political will to confront the issue and implement what will be difficult and controversial solutions.1765
Sunnis, most often the victims of Shi’ite death squads, similarly did not see this proposal as a workable solution. Baha Aldin Abdul Qadir, a spokesman for the Iraqi Islamic Party said, “If we [consolidate] the militias and put them in the official forces of the Interior and Defense ministries, this will convey the problem [of the militia’s own violent agendas] to these ministries.”1766 He suggested that if absorption of militias into security forces were to occur, that it would have to be limited to the integration of these members into only civilian positions such as public-works programs or be stationed as border guards in remote areas. 1767

A much smaller scale version of this plan began to be implemented in May. The Interior Ministry issued new and distinctive badges and seals for the Facilities Protection Service, a group of more than 145,000 building guards that were increasingly independent from any command or ministry according to US and Iraqi officials. Initially established by Paul Bremer in 2003, the armed units numbered no more than 4,000 and were charged with protecting the facilities of various ministries, but were not under control of either the Defense or Interior ministry. Because these forces lacked any formal accountability and wore similar uniforms to the other police and security forces, officials speculated that these units were those often implicated by Iraqis in abductions, executions and body dumps that had been long blamed on the interior police force.1768

In an op-ed in major US newspapers in early June, al-Maliki highlighted the integration of militias into ISF as one of his top priorities for Iraq.1769

“To provide the security Iraqis desire and deserve, it is imperative that we reestablish a state monopoly on weapons by putting an end to militias. This government will implement Law 91 to incorporate the militias into the national security services. Unlike previous efforts, this will be done in a way that ensures that militia members are identified at the start, dispersed to avoid any concentration of one group in a department or unit, and then monitored to ensure loyalty only to the state. In addition, we will engage with the political leaders of the militias to crate the will to disband these groups.”

An aide to al-Maliki, Adnan Ali al-Kadhimi, elaborated on these plans. He said that the process would begin with the classification of the militias based on whether or not they cooperated with the government in the past, and whether they were formed within or outside of Iraq. Al-Kadhimi said that this may include payments or pensions to some older members of the militias. He warned however, that not all members would be willing to integrate and that using force to disband the groups was an option that Iraqi leaders could exercise.1770

In September, al-Maliki responded to the increased efforts on behalf of US and Iraqi forces to curtain militia activity. The Prime Minister expressed concerns that military force would only alienate and spur on the militias and, he insisted that US commanders forewarn him of any planned attacks into militia-controlled areas. Al-Maliki’s spokesman said, “Our fear is that the Americans will treat Al Mahdi army and other militias the same way that they treat the Saddamists and the terrorists. We don’t want to solve this problem with military force.” Both the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, the political organization responsible for the Badr Brigade, and Al-Sadr’s party hold 30 seats in Parliament. Al-Miliki’s concerns thus stem from fears that attacks on militias would disrupt his tenuous political support. Consequently, US forces refrained from striking Shi’ite militia strongholds, such as Sadr City.1771

Also in September 2006, some US soldiers warned that they thought militia forces outnumbered Iraqi security forces. What was more troubling, however, was they noted that Sadr enjoyed greater support in the capital than did the police.1772
In an initiative to curb the use of MOI vehicles, weapons, and uniforms by insurgents the Iraqi government started identifying official vehicles and issuing new and different uniforms, according to US Army Colonel Thomas Vail in an address on September 1, 2006.1773

The new uniforms were officially put to use on October 9, 2006. The new police garb featured camouflaged pants – similar to that worn by the US military – that would be difficult to counterfeit. The uniforms had serial numbers that would be linked in a computer database to photo IDs of the officers they were issued to. Police vehicles were also outfitted with new identification numbers. The goal of the new equipment was to reduce the ability of sectarian militias to create counterfeit uniforms and vehicles. US military officials said that they hoped the items would help increase civilian trust in Iraqi security forces.1774

On October 4, the MOI announced that the 700-policeman brigade responsible for security in the area where 26 Sunni food factory workers were kidnapped would be pulled out of service and investigated. US military spokesman Maj. Gen. Caldwell said, “There was some possible complicity in allowing death squad elements to move freely when they should have been impeding them. The forces in the unit have not put their full allegiance to the government of Iraq and gave their allegiance to others.” The decommissioning was the first of its kind and showed that Maliki’s government was beginning to respond to urges by the US military to rid security forces of sectarian militias.1775

The spokesman for the Interior Ministry said that 3,000 employees had been fired since May, 600 of who would face prosecution. He also announced that the ministry would reshuffle top commanders in an attempt to rid the government of militia complacency.1776 The following day, the Interior Ministry announced that two senior police commanders would be demoted. The two generals led the special police commanders and the public order brigade, two of the divisions highly infiltrated by Shi’ite militias.1777

The efforts by the MOI were a step in the right direction, but they were not enough to calm Sunni fears that the ISF were free of militia components. Militia membership, particularly in the Mahdi Army, was so large that working with the militias rather than attempting to eliminate them seemed the only viable option.

In early January 2007 al-Maliki announced that he would not tolerate the sectarian actions of the Mahdi Army and that he would not protect al-Sadr. The government held some 430 Mahdi Army members in mid-January.1778 There was evidence that Sadr would stand down his militia with the US surge, allowing troops to focus on Sunni insurgents and rogue member of the Mahdi Army.

**Insurgent Pressure on the Shi’ites to Move Toward Civil War**

Since the January 30, 2005 election, much of the Sunni insurgent activity has been directly targeted at Shi’ite clergy and political leaders, Shi’ite civilians, and Shi’ite institutions. Attacks have also been targeted for key Shi’ite holidays like the February 19th Ashura holiday and the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

While most Shi’ite leaders have continued to resist calls for reprisals against Sunnis, other Shi’ites have called for such action, and Shi’ite killings of Sunni clergy and civilians have increased.1779 The resistance of Shi’ite leaders’ to this pressure to attack Sunnis caused one US military observer -- Brig. Gen. John Custer –to state in July 2005 that, “The incredible violence that the Shi’a community has endured over last year leads me to believe that they are smart
enough and understanding of the big picture enough to back away from civil war at all costs. The specter of the dark cloud of civil war has moved away. It is much less evident than it was last year.”

**Accelerating Violence in 2005**

Events, however, have put more and more pressure on Shi’ite restraint. The single deadliest day for Iraqi Shi’ites was August 31 when almost 1,000 Shi’ite pilgrims were killed in a stampede in Baghdad. The pilgrims were crossing the al-Aima bridge en route to the shrine of Moussa al-Kadhim when rumors began to spread that there were Sunni suicide bombers in their midst. The resulting panic ended in 953 Shi’ites dead, according to the Iraqi interior ministry. Moqtada al-Sadr vowed vengeance against Sunnis, who he believed organized the pandemonium. Later in a sermon, Sadr spoke out against the Coalition’s presence in Iraq, as it hampered a sectarian war, which he asserted had already begun. Prior to the stampede, Moqtada al-Sadr had publicly opposed Shi’ite participation in sectarian warfare.

As already mentioned, on September 14, 2005, Iraq’s Al-Qa’ida leader and Sunni insurgent Abu Musab al-Zarqawi declared war on Shi’ite Muslims in Iraq. According to the recording posted on the Internet, the declaration came in response to the recent joint U.S.-Iraqi offensive in the town of Tal Afar, a Sunni insurgent stronghold. Zarqawi referred to the assault as an “organized sectarian war.” Earlier that day, al Qa’ida said in an Internet posting it was waging a nationwide suicide bombing campaign to avenge the military offensive against Sunni rebels in Tal Afar.

Following Zarqawi’s declaration, Baghdad erupted in violence:

- **September 14, 2005:**
  - At least 167 people die and more than 570 injured as more than a dozen bombs explode throughout Baghdad. Marks the single worst day of killing to hit the capital since the US-led invasion of March 2003.
  - A suicide bomber in a car blew himself up in Baghdad, killing 11 people who lined up to refill gas canisters, police said. The blast in northern Baghdad, which also wounded 14, came hours after what appeared to be a series of coordinated blasts, including one that killed at least 114 people.
  - Gunmen wearing military uniforms surrounded the village of Taaji north of Baghdad and executed 17 men, police said. The dead were members of the Tameem tribe, al-Hayali said. The gunmen looted the village before leaving.
  - A Vehicle-borne improvised explosive device exploded in the Uruba Square in the Zahra district of northwest Baghdad. The terrorist attack killed at least 75 Iraqi civilians and wounded more than 130. The wounded were evacuated to the Al-Shulla Hospital in central Baghdad where another suicide VBIED detonated, causing more civilian casualties.
  - A Suicide Car bomb attack in occurred in a Kadimiya market area north of Baghdad. At least 80 were killed and 150 injured.
  - Task Force Baghdad unit reported striking a VBIED in west Baghdad. The Soldiers established a cordon and began searching the area for triggermen. Several Iraqi civilians were wounded in the attack. There were no US casualties.
  - A VBIED detonated on a US convoy in east Baghdad. The suicide bomber was reportedly driving against traffic before detonating on the convoy. Two US Soldiers received non-life-threatening wounds in the attack. Ten minutes later, a suicide VBIED detonated near a US convoy in southeast Baghdad with no injuries to US personnel or damage to equipment.
• A VBIED attack against US forces in central Baghdad failed when the terrorist struck an M1 Abrams tank but did not detonate his explosives. The tank crew reported the driver was still alive and trapped inside the vehicle with a 155-millimeter round. The Task Force Baghdad unit secured the site and called for assistance from an explosive ordnance disposal team.

• September 15, 2005:
  • Suicide bombers continued to strike Baghdad, killing at least 31 people, 23 of them Iraqi police and Interior Ministry commandos.
  • A suicide bomber killed 15 police commandoes in the Dora district of Baghdad, police said. Five civilians were also killed. The blast wounded 21 people. Hours later, two more bombs detonated in the same area. Ten more policemen died in the explosion and ensuing gun battle with insurgents.
  • Two police officers were killed and two wounded in Kirkuk.
  • Three civilians were killed in an attack on a Ministry of Defense bus east of Baghdad.
  • Three bodies of people who had been shot dead were found in the Shula district of Baghdad, police said.
  • Three bodies were found in the New Baghdad district. Police said they had been shot dead.
  • Gunmen in northern Baghdad killed three Shi’ite pilgrims on route to Karbala for a religious festival.
  • Three workers were killed and a dozen wounded in east Baghdad in a drive-by shooting by unidentified gunmen. The attack occurred in an area where laborers gather each day for work.

Violence continued to escalate throughout September, with insurgents killing more than 100 Iraqi civilians on the last two days of the month alone in the predominantly Shi’ite town of Balad, in the Sunni region of Salah ad Din, north of Baghdad. September 2005 was the bloodiest month yet in terms of multiple-fatality insurgent bombings, with 481 Iraqis killed and 1,074 wounded.

The wave of deadly attacks launched by Zarqawi continued into October, and President Bush warned that the violence would further intensify in the run-up to the October 15 referendum and December elections. As violence in Iraq increased in the fall of 2005 so too did the number of sectarian incidents. In one six-week period, more than 30 Iraqis died as part of sectarian attacks in the Ghazaliya neighborhood of Baghdad. Sectarian violence in Baghdad’s mixed neighborhoods began accelerating sharply in the summer of 2005 and continued to do so throughout the fall. According to Iraqi government statistics, the number of sectarian targeted killings almost doubled in 2005, in spite of the increased presence of Iraqi security forces on the streets.

In many cases, such as the Ghazaliya murders, the victims were randomly selected based on their religion and had little if any involvement in politics. The ongoing violence also caused many Iraqis to relocate to areas where they constitute the majority. According to Edward Joseph of the Woodrow Wilson Center, “Once displacement starts, it is a never-ending cycle.” Joseph believes the key question will be how the minority community reacts after the murder of one of its own: “If they don’t flee, if they just hang around and then order up some reprisal killing a little later…it’s probably less likely to be civil war.” But, Joseph also notes that the current pattern of displacement in Iraq today loosely resembles the departure of Bosnian Muslims in the mid-1990s following attacks by Serbian militias, a development that ended up increasing, not decreasing, the level of violence in that region.
As in 2004, Shi’ite-Sunni violence continued during the holy month of Ramadan in 2005. On the first day of the month-long holiday, a suicide car bomber targeting an Interior Ministry official blew himself up outside Baghdad’s Green Zone, wounding several civilians.\(^\text{1786}\) That same day, an Internet message posted by Al Qa'ida in Iraq called for additional attacks during the holy month as well as a boycott of the October 15 referendum. The following day, October 5, a suicide car bomb exploded outside the Husseiniyat Ibn al-Nama Mosque in Hillah as Shi’ite worshippers gathered to pray, killing at least 24 and wounding several dozen.\(^\text{1787}\)

### Violence in 2006

In early January 2006, violence spiked again, killing nearly 200 people in two days. One suicide attack occurred at a Shi’ite shrine in Karbala killing 63 and wounding 120. As political groups attempted to construct a governing coalition, protests broke out in Sadr City where over 5,000 Shi’ites condemned the violence and chastised Sunni leaders. SCIRI issued a warning to the Sunni insurgents that its patience was wearing thin and that it may use the Badr Brigade to conduct retaliation attacks. Izzat al-Shahbandar, an official with the Iraqi Accordance Front, the main Sunni coalition party involved in the negotiation process, remarked that the current Shi’ite-dominated government was acting as an “accomplice” in the ongoing violence by pursuing sectarian policies and strengthening militias.\(^\text{1788}\)

According to Aya Abu Jihad, the owner of a store in Baghdad, “People are being killed because they are Shi’ites, and others are killed because they are Sunnis.” Some senior Iraqi government officials believed that the wave of sectarian violence posed a greater threat to stability than did the possible rejection of the draft constitution by a majority of Iraqis: “The government now is so inefficient at controlling the situation that the security situation has deteriorated, and so the political situation has deteriorated…They have to get security under control, otherwise [the constitution] is not going to matter.” A former general in the Iraqi army known as Abu Arab echoed that sentiment, saying, “People don’t want a constitution—they want security.”\(^\text{1789}\)

At the same time, senior Shi’ite and Kurdish politicians still pressed for a peaceful political solution and for an inclusive unity government. Even relative hard line Shi’ite politicians like Abdelaziz Hakim pressed for more care on the part of Shi’ite forces in dealing with Sunnis. On February 8, 2006, he called for Iraq’s security forces "to continue strongly confronting terrorists but with more consideration to human rights."

The Shi’ite holiday of Ashoura passed in early February 2006 without any major incidents or attacks. In the two years previous however, insurgents killed over 230 Shi’ites.

Despite acts of sectarian violence, the Pentagon maintained in February 2006 that the overall number of incidents remained low when compared with total attacks. However it did not rule out the possibility that this would remain the case in the future. Additionally, it stated that sectarian violence is “frequently a matter of perception” and that it was difficult to distinguish between attacks on citizens in general and those intentionally aimed at a particular sect.\(^\text{1790}\)

The bombing of the Askariya Shrine, revered by Shi’ites, caused a dramatic upsurge in sectarian violence in late February, resulting in the deaths of well over 300 Iraqi’s in five days. Shi’ite demonstrations in the streets of Iraq were numerous. Peaceful demonstrations were held across the Shi’ite dominated south and in ethnically mixed cities such as Kirkuk.\(^\text{1791}\) Statements by participants and average civilians gave indications that Shi’ite resistance to sectarian conflict may have worn out. A Shi’ite employee of the Trade Ministry stated this much to a reporter:
“You have a TV, you follow the news…Who is most often killed? Whose mosques are exploded? Whose society was destroyed?” The same individual appeared to emphasize the advantage that sheer size would bring the Shi’ites in any civil conflict saying, “If they have 100 people, we have millions…Look at these people [motioning towards the demonstrators] I’m just a drop in this ocean.”

Amid demonstrations and condemnations from both Sunni and Shi’ite political leaders, Shi’ite militias such as al-Sadr’s Mahdi Army sought revenge against Sunni’s and carried out numerous killings and attacks on Sunni mosques. Sunni groups reciprocated.

By noon on the day of the bombing, attacks on Sunni’s and Sunni mosques, allegedly by the Mahdi Army, were already being reported. One such attack on a Sunni mosque that occurred in a mixed neighborhood near Sadr City was recounted in a New York Times article the following day:

“Ahmed al-Samarai, who lives in front of the mosque, said he saw about seven cars full of men wearing black, the signature Mahdi dress, fire machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades at the mosque, gouging a large hole in a side wall.

They entered the building and led away a man who performs the call to prayer, Abu Abdullah, telling his wife and three children to leave the building, Mr. Samarai said. They returned later, poured gasoline in the mosque, and set it on fire. Neighbors are still looking for Mr. Abdullah.”

By Thursday morning, one Iraqi described the environment: “We didn’t know how to behave. Chaos was everywhere.” Even the more moderate Shi’ite newspaper, Al Bayyna al Jadidah, urged Shi’ites to assert themselves in the face of Sunni violence. Its editorial stated that it was “time to declare war against anyone who tries to conspire against us, who slaughters us every day. It is time to go to the streets and fight those outlaws.”

Al-Sadr ordered his Mahdi Militia to protect Shi’ite shrines across Iraq, and blamed the US and Iraqi government for not failing to protect the Askariya shrine saying, “If the government had real sovereignty, then nothing like this would have happened.” In a speech from Basra, al-Sadr also called for restraint and unity amongst Iraqi’s: “We got rid of the evil Saddam and now we have a new dictatorship, the dictatorship of Britain, the US and Israel…I call on Muslims, Sunnis and Shi’ites, to be brothers…Faith is the strongest weapons, not arms.” He also ordered his listeners to not attack mosques in retaliation saying, “There is no Sunni mosques and Shi’ite mosques, mosques are for all Muslims…it is one Islam and one Iraq.” He also called for “a united peaceful demonstration in Baghdad” and labeled “Ba’athists and extremists” as “the enemy.”

The Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani also hinted towards a more active posture by Shi’ites saying, “If the security systems are unable to secure necessary protection, the believers are able to do so with the might of God.”

Sunni politicians alleged that Sunni mosques in Baghdad and some southern cities were either attacked or actively occupied by the Mahdi Army in the days following the attacks. The Association of Muslim Scholars, a hard line Sunni clerical organization, alleged on Thursday that 168 Sunni mosques were attacked, 10 imams killed and 15 abducted. Other, more objective estimates however put the number of mosques attacked at around 30. The association also made direct appeals to al-Sadr to intervene and stop the violence, apparently suspecting he was a primary coordinator of the Shi’ite attacks. Using a title of respect Abdul
Salam al-Kubaisi of the group said, “I call on Sayyid Moqtada Sadr and remind him what happened to the blood of both of us in Fallujah, Karbala and Najaf.”

In some Sunni areas, residents, fearing attacks on their mosques, erected barricades and stood watch. In Al Moalimin district, armed men patrolled the roof of the Sunni mosque Malik bin Anas.

The cycle of sectarian violence that followed the attack, much of which consisted of reprisal attacks by Shi’ite militias, continued relatively unabated through March and into April. The Islamist extremist insurgents, whose goal it was to push Iraq into civil war, apparently assessed that they had come close after the Askariya attack and tried to replicate the act through further attacks on Shi’ite holy sites.

Although it is unclear if the bombings were related, on April 6, 7, and 8, suicide attacks and car bombs either struck directly at or very close to several Shi’ite holy sites. On April 6, a car bomb exploded near the sacred Imam Ali shrine in Najaf killing 10 and injuring 30. One day later, three suicide bombers targeted the Baratha mosque in Baghdad, a primary headquarters for SCIRI, killing more than 80 and wounding more than 140. The Iraqi Health Ministry stated that 90 were killed and over 170 wounded. At least two of the bombers were dressed as women to hide the bombs and slipped into the mosque as the worshippers left. The first bomb detonated at the main exit, and the second inside the mosque as people rushed back in for safety. Ten seconds later, the third bomb exploded. Again, the next day, a car bomb killed six people and wounded 14 near a Shi’ite shrine south of Baghdad.

These bombings were a typical tactic used by Islamist insurgents who often attacked Shi’ite civilians on days marking religious observation or during religious gatherings, and occasionally attacked mosques directly. The near “success” of the February 22 bombing caused these insurgents to mix the horror of mass casualty suicide attacks with the impact of attacking sites of religious significance in an attempt to stall the political process and prod the Shi’ites into reprisal attacks and civil war.

Reaction by Shi’ite political and religious leaders was similar to that after February 22 in that they urged restraint among their followers. At a rally of SCIRI supporters shortly after the series of April bombings, the head of the party Abdul Aziz al-Hakim addressed the crowd: “This nation will not fall into the trap of sectarian war that is being pursued by Zarqawi’s group.” Although such public proclamations of restraint and non-violence are politically useful, it was unclear if Shi’ite militias which continued to be implicated in retaliatory abductions and killings were heeding such messages.

Increased attacks on Iraqi civilians by insurgents in the summer 2006, with July having the highest number of deaths since the invasion, spurred the growth of Shi’ite militias and reprisal killings. In Sadr City, Shi’ites relied on the Madhi Army for protection, rather than Iraqi security forces. After three years of unabated violence, Iraqis residents showed their impatience with US and Iraqi force efforts to bring security by relying on Shi’ite militias to provide for their safety.

By 2007 the pressure from insurgents had pushed Shi’ite armed groups into a low-level civil conflict. Neighborhoods in Baghdad and other urban areas were increasingly divided along sectarian lines, which had created roughly 1.6 million internally displaced persons. Iraqi civilians were forced to rely on militias or armed groups for protection against sectarian attacks. Sunni insurgents continued to use suicide and IED bombings to provoke Shi’a retaliatory attacks.
Shi’ite militias, particularly in Baghdad, most often responded by killing Sunnis execution style, often torturing them first. As political, economic, and security conditions deteriorated, more and more Sunnis and Shi’a were pushed into the escalating civil war.

XIV. The Kurds and Other Minorities

The January 2005 elections made the Kurds far more powerful relative to other Iraqi factions in military and security terms than their 15% of the population might indicate. Iraqi security and stability depends on finding a power-sharing arrangement that gives the Kurds incentives to be part of the political process just as much as it does on developing such arrangements for the Arab Sunnis.

There is no basic political or economic reason such a compromise cannot be found. Unfortunately, however, Iraq has a long history of not finding such compromises on a lasting basis and Saddam Hussein’s legacy left many areas where Kurds were forcibly expelled and Sunni Arabs and minorities were given their homes and property.

Large numbers of Kurds favor independence over political inclusiveness. This helps explain why the Kurdish turnout in the October referendum on the constitution varied widely. In predominantly Kurdish provinces, participation was much lower than in the January election. Some analysts have suggested the lower turnout was a result of increased voter apathy among a Kurdish population who felt assured the Constitution would pass.

Others noted the increase in dissatisfaction with the central government and the idea of remaining in Iraq among Kurdish populations. Riots and demonstrations protesting the shortages of gas, fuel and power have become more common in Kurdish cities. Some Kurds may also have felt let down by a Constitution that did not specifically address the status of Kirkuk or lay out a clear path to secession.

Kurdish Parties and the Kurdish Militias

The two major Kurdish parties, the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) headed by Masoud Barzani and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, headed by Jalal Talibani, retain powerful militias, known collectively as the Peshmerga. Their current strength is difficult to estimate, and some elements are either operating in Iraqi forces or have been trained by US advisors. The Iraqi Kurds could probably assemble a force in excess of 10,000 fighters – albeit of very different levels of training and equipment.

The Kurdish Peshmerga trace their origins to the Iraqi civil wars of the 1920s. They fought against the Saddam Hussein regime during the Iran-Iraq war and supported US and Coalition military action in 2003. The Peshmerga groups of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) serve as the primary security force for the Kurdish regional government. The PUK and KDP claim that there are 100,000 Peshmerga troops, and they have insisted on keeping the Peshmerga intact as guarantors of Kurdish security and political self-determination.

Throughout 2006, the PUK discussed reform, but the principle issue was future leadership. Three power grouping emerged in support of leading figures – Nawshirwan Mustafa, Kosrat Rasoul, and Talibani. The political debate over future leadership was so intense by the end of 2006 that it seemed capable of divided the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The Kurdistan Democratic
Party (KDP) was also fighting internally, with severe accusations of corruption of the Barzani family. In 2006 the PUK and KDP continued to compete within the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), but few reforms were made for the benefit of Kurdistan.\textsuperscript{1806}

As the sectarian violence spread from Baghdad to surrounding regions, the Kurdish position on the civil war was unclear. Some Kurdish politicians said they expected Kurdistan to separate itself from the rest of Iraq if the fighting reached far enough north, but the issues of resources and Kirkuk could force the KGR to become military involved.

Kurdistan continued to rely principally on the Peshmerga for security in the fall of 2006. The August-November DoD Stability and Security in Iraq Report to Congress said of the Peshmerga:\textsuperscript{1807}

\begin{quote}
The Peshmerga is a security organization that operates as a regional guard force described in Article 121 of the Iraqi Constitution. It maintains security independently within and along Iraq’s borders for the Kurdistan Regional Government. Private security companies have hired individual Peshmerga members for work outside the Kurdish area. Some members of the Peshmerga have been integrated into the Iraqi Army; there are allegations that these former Peshmerga members remain loyal to Kurdish authorities rather than to their proper Iraqi chain of command. Although the Peshmerga does not attack Coalition or Iraqi forces, and in some cases provides security for reconstruction efforts, the perceived dual allegiance of the Peshmerga undermines effective national security and governance.
\end{quote}

\section*{Tensions Between the Kurds and Other Iraqis}

There are serious tensions between the Kurds, the Turkomans, and Assyrian Christians, as well as between Kurds and Arabs. At a local level, there are many small tribal elements as well as numerous “bodyguards,” and long histories of tensions and feuds. Even if Iraq never divides along national fracture lines, some form of regional or local violence is all too possible.

Insurgent activity in the Kurdish areas was particularly intense in the city of Irbil, which has been the site of several suicide bombings. In summer 2005, Kurdish security officials and the KDP intelligence service announced the arrest of approximately six insurgent suspects who, the authorities believe, came from six separate and previously unheard of militant organizations. The head of the Irbil security police, Abdulla Ali, stated that there was evidence that the groups had links to international terror groups, established jihadist groups in Iraq like Ansar al-Sunna, and even had links to intelligence services from nearby countries.\textsuperscript{1808} This evidence was not made public, but the Kurdish authorities stated that it appeared as though various groups were working together and that, to the anger and disappointment of the Kurdish authorities, that local Kurds were assisting them.

Tension between the Kurds and Iraqi Arabs and other minorities has also been critical in areas like Kirkuk and Mosul. The Kurds claim territory claimed by other Iraqi ethnic groups, and demand the return of property they assert was seized by Saddam Hussein, during his various efforts at ethnic cleansing from 1975 to 2003.

The future of Kirkuk and the northern oil fields around it is the subject of considerable local and national political controversy between the Kurds and other Iraqis. The Kurds claim that over 220,000 Kurds were driven out of their homes by Saddam in the 1970s and fighting in the Gulf War, and that over 120,000 Arabs were imported into “Kurdish territory.” The Kurds see control of Kirkuk as their one chance to have territorial control over a major portion of Iraq’s oil reserves, but Kirkuk is now roughly 35% Kurd, 35% Arab, 26% Turcoman, and 4% other. This makes any such solution almost impossible unless it involves violent means.
There has been armed violence between Kurds, Arabs, and Turkomans, as well as struggles over “soft” ethnic cleansing in the North, and there may well be more violence in the future. Many experts feel that the only reason Kirkuk has been relatively peaceful, and still has something approaching a representative government, is that the Kurds have not been strong enough relative to the other factions in the city to impose their will by intimidation or force.

Reports in August 2005 indicated that government police and military forces in the Kurdish north were using their power to intimidate Arabs through abductions and assassinations. Such activity poses the threat of deepening regional fissures. Likewise, the misuse of power by Coalition-sponsored forces could deepen resentment toward Coalition forces, particularly among the Sunni population.1809

Other Kurdish actions have exacerbated ethnic tension in a struggle for the control of Kirkuk. There are reports that the KDP and PUK systematically kidnapped hundreds of Arabs and Turkomans from the city and transported them to prisons in established Kurdish territory in an apparent bid to create an overwhelming Kurdish majority.1810 This activity allegedly spread to Mosul as well. While some of the abductions had occurred in 2004, reports indicated that there was a renewed effort following the January 30th elections that solidified the two parties’ primacy in the Kurdish areas.

According to a leaked State Department cable in mid-June 2005, the abducted were taken to KDP and PUK intelligence-run prisons in Irbil and Sulaymaniyah without the knowledge of the Iraqi Ministry of Defense or the Ministry of the Interior, but sometimes with US knowledge. In fact, the Emergency Services Unit, a special Kirkuk force within the police, was both closely tied to the US military and implicated in many of the abductions, along with the Asayesh Kurdish intelligence service.1811 It should be noted that the head of the Emergency Services Unit is a former PUK fighter.

Kirkuk province’s Kurdish governor, Abdul Rahman Mustafa, stated that the allegations were false. However, the State Department cable indicated that the US 116th Brigade Combat Team had known about the activity and had asked the Kurdish parties to stop. 1812 According to Kirkuk’s chief of police, Gen. Turhan Yusuf Abdel-Rahman, 40% of his 6,120 officers probably assisted in the abductions, disobeying his orders and following the directives of the KDP and PUK instead. Abdel-Rahman stated, “The main problem is that the loyalty of the police is to the parties and not the police force. They’ll obey the parties’ orders and disobey us.”1813 According to Abdel-Rahman, the provincial police director, Sherko Shakir Hakim, refused to retire as ordered by the government in Baghdad once he was assured that the KDP and PUK would continue to pay him if he stayed on. The various factions in Kirkuk seem to have agreed on a compromise local government in June 2005, but the city continues to present a serious risk of future conflict.

The issue of Kirkuk took on a new importance after the December 2005 elections. In prior months, thousands of Kurds erected settlements in the city, often with financing from the two main Kurdish parties. In addition, violence began to rise, with 30 assassination-style killings from October through December. Kurdish political groups were increasingly open about their intent to incorporate Kirkuk into Iraqi Kurdistan and continue to repatriate Kurds into the city in an effort to tip the ethnic balance in their favor. They stated they sought to accomplish this by the time of the popular referendum in 2007, which is to determine whether the Tamim province will
be governed by the Kurdish regional government, or from Baghdad. The future of Kirkuk will be a central factor for Kurdish political groups as they work to form a governing coalition.

The re-election of al-Jaafari as Prime Minister further frustrated the Kurdish politicians. They accused him of being slow to implement Article 58 of the constitution that stipulates that the question of the “normalization” of Kirkuk must take place by the end of 2007. In fact, the political alliance between Kurds and Shi‘ites, once considered natural given their common grievances against the Sunni-dominated Ba‘ath party, was opening up to question.

Kurdish views of the increased sectarian violence between Sunni and Shi‘ite Arabs differed. One perspective has its roots in the historical animosity between Kurds and Arabs. A sectarian civil war could bring benefits to the Kurds if, as one individual said, “our enemies [are] killing each other.” According to this theory, if civil war breaks out in Iraq, the Kurds will then be justified in breaking away to form an independent Kurdistan. In this situation, the international community would be forced to acquiesce to such a move.

The opposite view is more hesitant and less optimistic. These individuals worry that although civil war may initially begin in central and southern Iraq, it could spread northward, threatening the stability and relative security they have attained since the 2003 invasion. In fact, there were some reports in the first months of 2006 that Shi‘ite militias were migrating north into cities like Kirkuk and moving into mosques in the area as a protection force. If civil war does reach the Kurds, some believe Iraqi Arabs, as well as Turkey, Syria and Iran would object to Kurdish separation and that countries such as Turkey that have sizeable Kurdish populations, may intervene militarily to prevent an independent Kurdish nation.

In April 2006, Shi‘ite militias began to deploy to Kirkuk in substantial numbers. According to US embassy officials in the region, the Mahdi Army had sent two companies with 120 men each. The Badr Organization extended its reach into the city as well and opened several offices across the Kurdish region. The influx of Shi‘ite militias began in the days following the February 22 Askariya bombing. The shift northward was justified by the organizations as a necessary step to protect Shi‘ite mosques and families. Yet Shi‘ites, many of whom were transferred to the area under Saddam’s rule, only make up about 5% of the population in the area.

Although Iraqi security officials in Kirkuk maintain that the new militia arrivals have generally kept a low profile, the Kurdish Peshmerga responded by moving nearly 100 additional troops to the area. Moreover, an al-Sadr associate in the region, Abdul Karim Khalifa, told US officials that more men were on the way and that as many as 7,000 to 10,000 local residents loyal to the Mahdi Army would join in a fight if one were to come.

The Kurdish militias have not yet presented as many problems for Iraqi security and Iraqi force development as the Shi‘ite militias, but the deployment of Shi‘ite militias into the Kirkuk area makes it clear that this is no guarantee for the future. Kurdish separatism and claims to areas like Kirkuk and Iraq’s northern oil fields remain potentially explosive issues. Thousands of Kurdish Peshmerga soldiers were incorporated into the Iraqi army during the formation of Iraqi forces. The Kurdish adage, “the Kurds have no friends,” seemed to hold true here as well. While Kurdish army units could operate effectively in their relatively ethnically homogenous north, they were often perceived as outsiders in Arab areas.

Even in the northern city of Balad in March 2006, a 700-man Kurdish army battalion was confined to their base by an angry and hostile Sunni population. The battalion, sent from
Sulaimaniyah to bolster the lone Shi’ite forces comprised of local residents, was resisted by the large Sunni minority in the area so much so that commanders were afraid to let their soldiers leave the base. US officials in the city said that this was because the battalion was mostly former Peshmerga, the armed group that has become the de facto army of the regional government in Kurdistan.\textsuperscript{1824}

In May, a Kurdish-dominated army unit openly clashed with its Shi’ite counterpart. The 1\textsuperscript{st} Battalion, 3\textsuperscript{rd} Brigade, 4\textsuperscript{th} Division hit a roadside bomb in Duluiyiah north of Baghdad. Although US and Iraqi officials disagreed over the number of dead and wounded in the incident, the Kurdish division raced their wounded to the US hospital in Balad. According to police reports when they arrived they began firing their weapons, ostensibly to clear the way, killing a Shi’ite civilian. As security forces arrived, the Kurdish army unit attempted to leave and take their wounded elsewhere. A Shi’ite army unit from the 3\textsuperscript{rd} Battalion, 1\textsuperscript{st} Brigade tried to stop them and shots were exchanged, killing a member of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} Battalion. As the Kurdish unit attempted to leave in their vehicles, a third army unit attempted to establish a roadblock to stop them. US forces however, were at the scene to intervene and restore calm.\textsuperscript{1825}

In September 2006, a dispute arose over which flag would be the official Iraqi national flag. The interim Iraqi Governing Council had decided to replace the flag in 2005, but no official decision was ever made. To complicate matters, Massoud Barzani demanded that the flag in use be replaced with the Kurdish national flag. Tempers inflamed readily within Parliament, but President Talibani dismissed the issues. Barzani, however, reminded Parliament that the Kurdish region would secede “without hesitation or fears.” Barzani argued that the flag in use did not represent all Iraqis and that the Kurdish flag should be adopted for the whole nation; the Kurdish region would then adopt a version of the flag used from 1959 to 1963 in the first years of the republic. He later tempered his statement and said that the Kurds had chosen a unified Iraq, but the situation again raised questions about Kurdish loyalties.\textsuperscript{1826}

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Sunni Arab and Kurdish police forces clashed in September in the mixed town of Jalawla on the southeast border of the northern Kurdish territory in September. The provincial council of Diyala had removed the Kurdish police commander of Jalawla and replaced him with a Sunni Arab. The former commander, accompanied by armed Kurdish men, attacked the police station at night and laid siege to the building. The Sunni commander and some of his officers were locked in a room and troops from a regional police station had to come and retake the station. The incident came at on the first day that Parliament was to discuss the issue of autonomous regions in Iraq. According to a draft constitution forwarded by the Kurdistan regional government to Parliament, Jalawla was to be included in the autonomous northern state. The town had a significant Arab
The issue of Kirkuk continued to top both Kurdish and Arab agendas in the fall of 2006. The few US troops stationed in Kirkuk could wander the streets with ease and were accepted by Kurdish residents and people roamed the streets until late at night. However, the peace was unlikely to last much longer, the Chicago Tribune reported.

The three step plan for Kirkuk outlined in the Iraqi Constitution set up a timeline for addressing the issue; by March 29, 2007 Kurdish towns and camps that had been administratively excluded from Kirkuk during Saddam Hussein’s reign would be re-included; by July 15, 2007 a census of the area would be complete; and by the end of 2007 residents of Kirkuk would hold a referendum to decide if they would join the region of Kurdistan.

Kurdish leaders, however, increasingly indicated that the decision on Kirkuk would not necessarily be reached through the process setup by the Constitution. Sadi Ahmed Pire, leader of the PUK, said, “Kirkuk can be solved two ways: We can discuss it with the neighboring countries and Iraqi communities and solve the situation politically or we can solve it militarily. We hope to solve it peacefully, but this is an issue that cannot wait. It will be resolved.”

If the civil conflict between Sunnis and Shi’ites spread as far north as Kirkuk, Kurdish politicians said they expected the KRG would “separate” Kurdistan from the rest of Iraq. And it was clear that the Kurds included Kirkuk with the rest of Kurdistan – for historical and economic reasons. The KRG’s position on the civil conflict between Sunnis and Shi’ites, however, was still unclear. Kurdistan repeatedly reminded the Iraqi government that their national participation was voluntary, yet if the question of Kirkuk came to military blows, the Kurds could find themselves tacitly involved and supporting one side in the sectarian war.

US News and World Report reported that Kurdish refugees were living in a soccer stadium outside Kirkuk waiting for land to become available or reclaim housing given back in the “normalization process.” Kurdish officials said that 50,000 Arab families had expressed a willingness to leave Kirkuk and that the referendum could still happen in 2007.

The Kurdish authorities in Kirkuk, however, said that normalization was proceeding too slowly. There were 40,000 housing applications filed under the constitutional act and most were appealed. Baghdad was simply too bogged down with the applications. Kurds stated that the ministry dealing with normalization included former Ba’athists who would protect the rights of Sunnis in Kirkuk and not force them relocate. It seemed unlikely that normalization would be completed before a census scheduled for mid-2007, further complicating the matter.

US commanders in the north were watching Kirkuk closely, because they feared an outbreak of violence if American or Iraqi leaders stalled the referendum. There was also concern that members of the Mahdi Army had arrived to protect minority Shi’ite residents. US officials also conceded that Arab communities had fewer basic services than Kurdish ones – most likely a result of the Kurdish dominated provincial government.

The struggle for Kirkuk remained important and unresolved at the start of 2007. A surge of violence at the turn of the new year foreshadowed the fighting that could occur if a referendum took place as planned in November 2007. Shi’ite militia and Sunni insurgent attacks on Kurdish communities continued at a rate that had not been seen since the summer of 2006.
Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) offices increased, as did the number of Kurdish refugees seeking to claim territory in the city.

The Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) maintained that the referendum would proceed as planned. However, on January 14, 2007 a group of Sunni and Shi’ite Arabs, Turkmen, and Christian Iraqis attended a conference in Ankara, Turkey to reject the incorporation of Kirkuk into Kurdistan.

This unity, however, was not visible in Kirkuk. Sadr’s Mahdi Army used threats and intimidation against Sunnis and Kurds as well as Kirkuk’s minority Shi’ite population, to keep them from leaving. The Peshmerga was also accused of illegally holding Sunni and Shi’ite Arabs and Turcomens in prisons.

The fight in Kirkuk, as in other cities, was for control of political and economic space. The number of groups involved, including Turkey, and the upcoming census in July 2007 and referendum in November 2007 made Kirkuk a particularly important space to control. In the latter half of 2007 the number of attacks by each militia would be irrelevant, but what would be important was how much political and economic support they could acquire; tactical victories meant little when it came time for the referendum on inclusion into the Kurdish area of “Kurdistan”.

On December 26, the New York Times reported that hundred of prisoners, some innocent, were being held in Kurdish prisons in poor conditions and without legal rights. The Minister and Director of Office of Foreign Relations, Falah Mustafa Bakir, of the Kurdistan Regional Government wrote a letter to the Times strongly disavowing the article. He said that anyone held in Kurdistan prisons “have known affiliations with Al Qaeda, Ansar al-Islam and other groups committed to killing Americans, Kurds and Iraqis. The rule of law is what guides our treatment of prisoners, whatever their crimes.”

However, the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq November – December Human Rights Report said:

Human rights violations are reportedly committed by security forces at detention centers. In many cases the arrest and detention of people is carried out by Kurdish militias. Detainees are often transferred directly to the Kurdistan Region without notifying the governorate or the police. Officials in Kirkuk are aware of such practices, yet no significant effort has been made to stop them...

**Uncertain Kurdish Unity**

Kurdish unity is always problematic. The Kurds have a saying that, “the Kurds have no friends.” History shows that this saying should be, “the Kurds have no friends including the Kurds.” The Barzani and Talibani factions have fought on several occasions, and there was a state of civil war between them during 1993-1995. PUK forces were able to take control of Irbil in 1994, and put an end to the first attempt to create a unified and elected government that began in 1992. Barzani’s KDP collaborated with Saddam Hussein in 1995, when Hussein sent a full corps of troops into Irbil and other parts of the area occupied by Talibani. Tens of thousands of Kurds and anti-Saddam activists fled the area, and the US did not succeed in brokering a settlement between the two factions until 1998.

Despite past, and potential future tensions and divisions between the PUK and KDP, leaders from both parties signed an agreement in January 2006, which allotted eleven ministerial posts to
each group. Minority parties were skeptical of KDP-PUK promises to give remaining posts to political factions who did not win a majority and worried that this further isolated them from any future role in the political process.  

The present marriage of convenience between the KDP and PUK has not unified the Kurdish controlled provinces in the north. There were minor clashes between their supporters in 1995, and these political divisions could create future problems for both Kurdish political unity and any agreement on some form of autonomy.

Kurdish frustration with these political parties manifested itself in violent protests in 2006 during ceremonies marking the anniversary of the March 1988 poison gas attack by Hussein at Halabja. Protestors alleged that the PUK and KDP had misappropriated millions of dollars in foreign aid given to the survivors of the attack.  

The protests, which began at 9am, slowly grew in number and groups began setting fire to tires and throwing rocks at the monument and museum dedicated to those killed under Saddam’s rule.

The few PUK dozen guards in front of the monument, who attempted to disperse the crowd by firing into the air, were outnumbered and forced to retreat. The protestors destroyed museum exhibits with rocks and then attempted to set it on fire. One protestor was killed by the gunfire from the guards and six others were wounded. A regional official, Shahu Mohammed Saed, who according to reports was one of the targets of the peoples’ frustration, blamed the riots on Ansar al-Islam. However, there seems to be little indication that this assertion is true.

A growing sense of discontent with the KDP and PUK, coupled with renewed calls to instate Islamic law, suggested that Kurds might increasingly turn to Islamic groups as a political alternative. Mohammed Ahmed, a member of Parliament for the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU), the largest Kurdish Islamic party in the regional parliament, the Kurdistan National Assembly said, “The Kurds are a Muslim nation and we have to follow Islam.” Parties such as the KIU have attracted controversy for their calls to reinstate Islamic law or “Sharia.”

Secular parties held 80 percent of the seats in Parliament, and would likely overturn any provisions for a greater role of Islamic law in the government. Still, such demands suggested a growing affinity for religious parties among the Kurdish population, who expressed a rising sense of frustration and malaise with the traditionally entrenched parties—widely perceived as corrupt and disconnected from the masses.

While Islamic parties were unlikely to shift the balance of political power in the near term, Joost Hiltermann of the International Crisis Group warned, “the KIU could become an organization that germinates radicals.” Such radicalization would prove problematic for the United States, which relied heavily on Iraqi Kurds’ historical opposition to radical Islamic groups, to provide intelligence on Arab/Islamic insurgents. The United States reportedly responded by developing plans to build a network of long-term military bases in Kurdistan.

Throughout 2006, the PUK discussed reform, but the principle issue was future leadership. Three power grouping emerged in support of leading figures – Nawshirwan Mustafa, Kosrat Rasoul, and Talibani. The political debate over future leadership was so intense by the end of 2006 that it seemed capable of divided the PUK. The KDP was also fighting internally, with severe
accusations of corruption of the Barzani family. In 2006 the PUK and KDP continued to compete within the KRG, but few reforms were made for the benefit of Kurdistan.\textsuperscript{1844}

**The Problem of Resources and Oil**

The Kurdish issue cannot be separated from the oil issue. The Kurds faced the problem in the months after the US led invasion that they had no control over Iraq’s oil resources or revenues. They lacked access to any port or lines of communication that were not subject to Iraqi, Turkish, or Iranian interdiction. In early fall, 2006 debates over federalism in the Parliament and control of oil resources were key sources of contention. The Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) claimed rights to the oil fields around the northern city of Kirkuk. Sunnis vehemently opposed talks of greater regional autonomy for fear that they would lose out on oil resources - making them dependent on the Shi’ite south or Kurdish north. The Iraqi constitution had intentionally been vague on control of oil so that the issue could be debated in the future.

In September 2006, *Agence France Presse* reported that the prime minister of Iraq’s Kurdish region condemned “any attempt by the central government to sabotage Kurdish moves to develop oil resources.” In Parliament, Premier Nechirvan Barzani said he would oppose any attempt by the central government to hinder the development of their oil industry. He then threatened Kurdish succession if the government did not back down. The proclamation came after Iraq’s national Oil Minister, Hussein Shahristani, said that his office would review oil deals signed by Kurdish authorities. Barzani stated that the Iraqi constitution gave the KRG authority over oil and gas since they were not “exclusive powers of the federal government.” Several exploratory projects showed potential oil reserves in the south of the Kurdish region and near the city of Kirkuk, and the mountainous region in the far north was widely believed to house untapped reserves.\textsuperscript{1845}

Recurrent fuel shortages renewed Kurdish calls for federalism. US Secretary Rice – in a trip to Iraq in October – called on Iraqis to make oil a “unifying factor.” Yet the new Kurdish regional energy minister said, “We are supposed to be an oil country, and we have this? Baghdad is failing us. We could do a better job.” The Kurds also announced plans to build two oil refineries to combat subsequent fuel crises. It was clear that the oil minister hoped that by the time the two refineries were complete the Kurds would have control over their own oil resources. Kurdistan had also signed contracts with foreign companies – DNO ASA of Norway, Genel Enerji of Turkey, and Addax Petroleum Corp. of Canada – to drill for oil. The official petroleum law of Kurdistan said that all future oil revenue would be shared with the rest of the country only on a voluntary basis – but this view was not shared by Baghdad.\textsuperscript{1846}

Although they may have large untapped oil reserves, Kurds were forced to illegally import oil from Iran. The legal gas stations in Kurdistan did little business as most Kurds received their fuel from side-of-the-road illegal operations. One teenage boy who ran such a service said that the he did not make much money because he was forced to import smuggle expensive oil from Iran; the Iraqi oil was too low grade.

The KRG called in experts, such as Jerry Kiser from Kansas, to help them realize the full potential of their oil reserves. Whether the profit would be Kurdish or national remained a contested issue at the start of 2007, but the oil must first be tapped and refined; much of the oil that Iraq did pump had to be sent to refineries abroad and re-imported.
Kiser said that he tried to recruit foreign companies to come to Kirkuk and excavate, but most feared the violence destroying the rest of the country. He said, “Lots of people come to meet the minister but nobody is really doing anything.” Only two small foreign companies worked in Kurdistan at the time. Foreign companies were particularly wary of oil-rich Kirkuk where sectarian tensions were high and pipelines were attacked regularly, costing millions of dollars to repair.\(^{1847}\)

The control of resources by the various groups involved in sectarian fighting became increasingly important as control of political and economic space was crucial to achieving success in the “war after the war”.

**The “Other Iraq”?**

As 2006 drew to a close, Kurdistan launched an advertisement and propaganda initiative to distance itself from the rest of violence torn Iraq. Ads on TV, radio, magazines, and the internet from Kurdistan were all focused on wooing western investors. The ads portrayed Kurds working together to improve their communities and were loaded with images of modernity and prosperity. A young girl says in the TV commercial, “See the promise, share the dream.” A website calls Kurdistan “a place where the universities, markets, cafes, and fair grounds buzz with progress and prosperity.” The chairman of the ad campaign said that the initiative is aimed at distancing Kurdistan from the crisis in the rest of Iraq, and the region as a whole.

The KRG also passed a law allowing foreign investors to have the same rights as Iraqi investors, such as full ownership of projects and free money transfers. The law also gave investors exemption from noncustoms taxes and duties for a decade. Kurdistan also sought to increase its appeal as a tourist destination, refurbishing museums, castles and mosques.

Several large Arab companies had already begun investing in the region, but US companies were slower to take the bait. Ford, GM, Cummins, Motorola, FedEx, and DaimlerChrysler all visited the region but did not make any long investment decisions. US oil companies were also reluctant to invest because of the security threat to pipeline and workers in Iraq. Despite Kurdistan’s ad campaign’s assurances of perfect security, foreign investors seemed to favor reality. The chairman said, “The Kurdistan region is secure. It doesn’t mean we’re immune from terrorist attacks but in terms of all-out civil war, there’s no insurgency, there’s no terrorism.”\(^{1848}\)

Yet to foreign investors, the KRG’s history of corruption remained a deterring factor, not to mention PKK rebel activity and potentially serious infighting between the PUK and KDP. It appeared at the end of 2006 that Kurdistan could not disassociate itself in the minds of foreigners with the rest of Iraq and that the region would have to address internal security and legitimacy issues before it could realize its aspirations of modernity.

**The Turkish Question**

All these problems were further compounded by the rebirth of the Kurdish insurgency in Turkey, and acute Turkish pressure on the Iraqi government, Iraqi Kurds, and MNSTC-I to both deny Turkish Kurdish insurgents a sanctuary, and set any example that would encourage Kurdish separatism in Turkey. The Turkish Kurdish Worker Party (PKK) is a movement that has often used northern Iraq as a sanctuary, and which led to several major division-sized Turkish military movements into the area under Saddam Hussein. While estimates are uncertain, some 6,000 PKK forces seemed to be in Iraq in the spring of 2005, with another 2,000 across the border.\(^{1849}\) These
same factors help explain why Turkey has actively supported Iraq’s small Turcoman minority in its power struggles with Iraq’s Kurds.

The February 2006 visit to Turkey by Prime Minister al-Jaafari created concern among Kurdish politicians and accusations that the trip was carried out in secret. Over the summer of 2006, there were signs that “the PKK’s war [was] spreading in unpredictable directions,” and drawing in regional actors. In late June, the PKK accused Iran for launching attacks on it bases in northern Iraq—perhaps under Turkish auspices—and the organization threatened retaliation inside Iran. Turkey’s ambassador to Washington announced later that Ankara had evidence that up to 3,000 fighters from the PKK had moved from positions in northern Iraq to the Turkish border in order to carry out operations inside Turkey.

In late August, Turkey began deploying forces along its border with Iraq in response to the failure of diplomatic efforts to deter the PKK from using bases within Iraq to launch attacks at Turkish forces. While Turkey’s build-up of forces was widely perceived to be a show of force, a political analyst in Istanbul, Cengiz Candar, added that it was also “a statement to the Americans that Turkey is uneasy and trying to follow up on its demands that the PKK be dismantled.”

In September 2006 Turkish authorities visited Kirkuk in northern Iraq to express support for the Turkoman minority. The Turkoman population had been complaining of increased sectarian prejudice from the Kurdish majority. They were particularly concerned that the Kurds would try to incorporate Kirkuk into the autonomous Kurdish region in the north – claiming rights to the vast oil fields underneath the city. The constitution that the KRG presented to Parliament in September did include Kirkuk, but any breakup of Iraq was officially postponed until 2008. The Turkish delegation warned the provincial council that it was Turkey’s right to protect the minority in Kirkuk. They said that Turkey would not interfere militarily, but added “Turkey is keen to preserve the territorial integrity of Iraq, but it is our right as a neighboring state to have a presence in Iraq just as the Americans have a presence.” Clearly these statements were contradictory as the American presence was predominantly military.

On September 11, Prime Minister Erdogan of Turkey sent a letter to Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki reiterating his concern with PKK activity. According to a Reuters article, he requested that Iraq take steps to halt cross-border attacks, shut down PKK affiliated parties in Iraq and label the PKK a terrorist organization, a step that had already been taken by the United States and the European Union.

In response to these concerns and in an effort to maintain a good relationship with its neighbor, the Iraqi government announced on September 19 that it would shut down all PKK offices around the country. Iraq also appointed a special coordinator for countering the PKK.

In early October, Kurdish rebels in Iraq declared a unilateral ceasefire. Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan urged the US to take advantage of the situation and crackdown on rebel activity, according to Reuters reports. US officials estimated that roughly 5,000 Turkish Kurd militants were based in Iraq at the time. Mr. Erdogan dismissed the ceasefire and said that rebels usually laid down their weapons during the winter months. On the contrary, Iraqi President Jalal Talibani, a Kurd, told the Turkish government that the PKK had no future; “I believe we have just entered a period of normalization in our relations with Turkey. The thorn that prevented trust between us was the PKK. But now the PKK is finished. It has no future.” The US had pressured
northern Iraqi Kurdish leaders when Turkey threatened military attacks on PKK bases in Iraq. Prime Minister Erdogan was under pressure in Turkey to crack down on the PKK before domestic elections in 2007.\textsuperscript{1859}

Despite the PKK unilateral ceasefire, Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul criticized Iraqi Kurdish leaders for not doing enough against the PKK. He said that if the Kurds continued to allow the group to operate, “We will do whatever is necessary to fight this organization. I want to give the message that if our friends don’t help us, we will do the job ourselves.” He was also concerned because “the PKK has a new source of weapons. They have obtained weapons and explosives from the Iraqi Army. They bring them into Turkey and use them with remote control devices.” There were no other reports of PKK rebels using equipment from the Iraqi army. But the Kurds were in charge of security in the northern region and were largely left to their own devices.\textsuperscript{1860}

The US responded to Turkey’s appeals at the end of October. State Department Coordinator for Iraq David Satterfield said, “No, we are not satisfied with progress on the PKK. There are more steps that need to be taken to ensure that the PKK does not return to violence… Too many Turks have suffered from PKK violence.” He said that the Iraqi government had to take more steps against the PKK, such as closing down PKK offices. He added that the ceasefire was not sufficient; the PKK had to lay down their arms for good.\textsuperscript{1861}

In mid November Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul again condemned the idea of dividing Iraq into three parts. He said, "God forbid, if Iraq breaks up, an unbelievably dark new period will begin. In such an event, Iraq's neighbors will not have the same attitude as today, of course. The world should know this." He also urged Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen in Kirkuk to reach an agreement on oil reserves and political representation to quell Turkish fears that Kirkuk was intended as a capital for the Kurdish north.\textsuperscript{1862} Gul made the statement a week after congressional elections in the US gave democrats the majority in the Senate and House, most likely making separation advocate Senator Joseph Biden (D-DE) chairman of the foreign relations committee.

Turkish Prime Minster Erdogan spoke with al-Maliki in November and pledged Turkey’s support of Iraq. Erdogan even offered to help train Iraqi police and army forces. The offer of support underscored Turkey’s concerns that the civil conflict in Iraq could spill over into the rest of region.\textsuperscript{1863}

Turkey’s Deputy Chief of General Staff General Ergin Saygun Saygun said about Turkey’s fight with the PKK, “Our opinion is clear. We will maintain the fight until we ensure that there is not even a single terrorist in the mountains. We cannot accept any other option about the PKK.”\textsuperscript{1864}

The \textit{Iraq Study Group Report} agreed that the PKK was a top concern for Turkey and that the neighboring country could take action against the PKK themselves, but the report did not offer any recommendations on how the US could solve the PKK problem and ease tensions with Turkey. The report urged the US to consider talks with regional countries – including Turkey – but Ankara’s willingness to help stabilize Iraq was directly tied to its concerns over the PKK.

According to a Turkish poll, PKK terrorism ranked top among the public’s concerns. The lack of action by both the PUK and KDP in Iraqi Kurdistan against the PKK was interpreted by Turkey as implicit sanctioning of rebel activity. Similarly, the lack of US action against the PKK and calling Kurdistan the most stable region in Iraq offers little incentive for Turkey to help stabilize
the warring Shi’ite and Sunni factions. A Washington Institute report hinted that the repercussions of US non-action against the PKK could hurt bilateral relations with Turkey for years to come.1865

In early January 2007 Prime Minister Erdogan of Turkey again accused the US and Iraq of failing to curb rebel PKK activity in northern Iraq. Erdogan said the mission led by US envoy Joseph W. Ralston, appointed in August to coordinate efforts against the PKK, made little if any progress. “We were to make joint efforts against the terrorist organization with the United States and Iraq. This has not materialized,” he said. He added, “Is this a tactic to distract us? We want concrete results.”

Erdogan argued that the US had promised to close PKK offices and to stop the flow of cash to rebels, but neither initiative took place. He also believed that US made bombs and weapons were being used by the PKK within Turkey. Turkey said it would give the US until late February or March 2007 to take action, but after that Ankara would be forced to take its own initiative against PKK activity.1866

Erdogan also reiterated that Turkey was ready and willing to help Iraq get back on its feet. He called stability in Iraq a more important foreign policy issue for Turkey at the beginning of 2007 than accession into the European Union. He said that Turkey was assessing what contributions could be made to help end the civil war status quo in Iraq.1867

President Bush said in his January 10 speech on strategy in Iraq, “We will work with the governments of Turkey and Iraq to help them resolve problems along their border.” The ‘problems’ were an apparent reference to the movement of PKK rebels from Iraq into Turkey. The President seemed to indicate that the US would not deal with Turkey directly on the issue, but rather help foster discussion between Iraq and Turkey.1868

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the following day at her testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee:

On Iraq, in particular, our regional diplomacy has several components. One concerns Iraq’s neighbor to the north: Turkey. President Bush and I have engaged retired General Joe Ralston to work with Iraq and Turkey on concerns about terrorism from the Kurdish Worker’s Party. Those efforts have helped to ease tensions, but we will do more to protect our ally, Turkey, from terrorist attacks.
XV. The Role of Outside States in the Insurgency

The pressure for civil war can also expand to involve outside states. Syria very clearly tolerates and supports Sunni neo-Salafi extremist operations on its territory in spite of its Alawite controlled government. A broader and more intense civil conflict could lead other Arab states to take sides on behalf of the Sunnis -- although Bahrain, Lebanon, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen are just a few of the states that have deep sectarian divisions of their own. Any major divisions within Iraq could reopen the Kurdish issue as it affects Turkey, and possibly Iran and Syria as well.

Iraqi leaders made it clear that they did not appreciate interference by outside states in internal affairs. In an interview on September 26, 2006 with National Public Radio, President Talibani warned that if other governments continued to instigate violence “the Iraqi people will respond in the same way – we’ll support the opposition of other countries [and] try to make trouble for them as they are doing for us... Iraq can help opposing forces of our neighboring countries.” Talabani referred specifically to Iran, Turkey, and Syria, the former two of which had significant Kurdish minorities seeking greater independence.

In a separate interview with the BBC in October, President Talibani said that violence could end in Iraq “within months” if Syria and Iran became involved in security efforts. He approved of a US panel, led by former Secretary of State James Baker, which was researching the effectiveness of America’s policy in Iraq. The panel was reviewing the future policy option of seeking greater involvement by Syria and Iran. Throughout the early fall, the US and Iraqi governments accused Syria and Iran of propagating the sectarian violence in Iraq. Syria purportedly allowed foreign insurgents to cross into Iraq at the border, and Iran stood accused of funding and equipping Shi’ite militias. Both countries denied the charges, and in the case of Iran, a British military investigation found little evidence to support the claim.

Syria had long been requesting talks with the US, but relations were strained by Syria’s involvement in the Israel-Hezbollah conflict. Any involvement of outside countries would have to be conducted in a way that visibly benefited all of Iraq’s ethnic groups – which would be difficult in the case of Shi’ite Iran. Moving additional foreign troops into Iraq would foster the growth of the insurgency, but both Syria and Iran could become involved in development and reconstruction assistance. These types of efforts would ease the burden on the US military and help provide vital services to Iraqis.

In mid-October, Egypt also voiced concern over the spread of sectarian warfare throughout the Middle East. Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Abul Gheit urged all regional leaders to work together in preventing full-scale civil war in Iraq. His comments came as Sunni and Shi’ite religious figures met in Mecca for a meeting of the Organization of Islamic Conference. “It is with the utmost concern that Egypt is witnessing the escalation of sectarian violence in Iraq and assassinations perpetrated on the basis of the ID card,” the minister said. Neither Ayatollah Sistani nor Moqtada al-Sadr sent representatives to Mecca, but both said they supported the conference.

The clerics attending the conference issued the “Mecca document.” The document called for an end to violence in Iraq and innocent bloodshed. It also called for the protection of Shi’ite and Sunni holy sites and for the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq. It remained to be seen what
active role outside states would take in stabilizing Iraq, but it was clear that religious leaders would work to prevent a regional war.

In November 2006, Prime Minister Maliki maintained that neighboring countries were interfering in Iraq affairs. He said, “The issue of security is one that is worrying us. We must say ‘stop’ to foreign intervention if we are to protect Iraq… We want to live in peace with our neighbors.” 1874

On November 21, Iraqi and Kuwaiti officials announced that the two countries had signed a deal allowing Kuwait to complete construction of a border fence. The deal officially demarcated the border in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 833 issued in 1993. In order to build the fence, Kuwait would have to compensate Iraqi farmers living on the border. The deal also created a “no man’s zone” on either side of the fence in which people would be banned and no activity allowed. Officials said that the two countries also began discussing the demarcation of maritime borders and the distribution of oil from border oilfields. 1875

In addition, Kofi Annan proposed an international conference outside of Iraq that would include key regional players and would aimed at reconciling Iraq’s political parties. 1876 However, top Iraqi leaders rejected the proposition, saying that Iraq did not need outside help to solve political differences.

Prime Minister Maliki stated, “His call for an international conference on Iraq is a denial of will of the Iraqi people.” 1877 President Talibani said, “We are an independent and a sovereign nation, and it we who decide the fate of the nation.” Foreign Minister Zebari said, “It is to take the political process back to square one and review all that is done in the past three years? If this is the aim, then we reject.” 1878 Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, leader of SCIRI, also rejected the proposal; “We reject any attempts to have a regional or international role in solving the Iraqi issue. We cannot bypass the political process.” 1879

However, the following week al-Maliki announced his plans to send envoys to neighboring countries to schedule a conference on Iraq. Maliki said that the conference would take place in Iraq and he would seek support – not interference – from outside states. He added, “After settling the political climate, we will call for a convening of convening of only those countries that want to ensure the security and stability of Iraq.” 1880

The discord within the Iraqi government over the involvement of outside states underscored the inability of leaders to present a coherent strategy to ending the violence – leaving Iraqis very skeptical that the government would be capable of preventing full-scale civil war.

The Iraq Study Group supported forming an international support group involving regional countries to discuss ways to quell violence in Iraq. The report said, “Left to their own devices, these governments will tend to reinforce ethnic, sectarian, and political divisions within Iraqi society.” 1881 The report recommended intense dialogue with both Syria and Iran and offered the following incentives to both countries: 1882

- An Iraq that does not disintegrate and destabilize its neighbors and the region.
- The continuing role of the United States in preventing the Taliban from destabilizing Afghanistan.
- Accession to international organizations, including the World Trade Organization.
- Prospects for enhanced diplomatic relations with the United States.

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• The prospect of a US policy that emphasizes political and economic reforms instead of (as Iran now perceives it) advocating regime change.

• Prospects for a real, complete, and secure peace to be negotiated between Israel and Syria, with US involvement as part of a broader initiative on Arab-Israeli peace.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice rejected negotiations with Syrian and Iran saying that the compensation required would be too great. However, the August-November Department of Defense Stability and Security update said, “The United States is facilitating regional negotiations on mutual interests and can help find common ground on contentious transnational issues.” The DoD Report also stated regarding Iran and Syria:

Iran and Syria are undermining the Government of Iraq’s political progress by providing both active and passive support to anti-government and anti-Coalition forces. The Coalition and the Government of Iraq have attempted to counter Iranian and Syrian influence diplomatically and by tightening security at the borders.

In early 2007 outside states continued to express their concerns about the deteriorating security situation in Iraq. Two key majority Sunni neighbors – Jordan and Saudi Arabia – were particularly concerned about the flow of Sunni refugees into their country and the prospect of Shi’ite domination of the region if Iraq’s Shi’a majority waged a cleansing campaign against Sunnis. Syria was also deeply concerned about the refugee crisis and overflowing sectarian tensions.

The Wall Street Journal reported on January 9, 2007 that the US was pursuing a strategy to convince its Sunni Arab state allies that it was counteracting the influence of Iran, whose involvement in Iraq was of growing concern to Sunni countries. The Bush administration promised to keep US forces in Iraq as long as necessary as well as increase naval forces in the Persian Gulf and deepen cooperation with Gulf States. The article states, “There are also advanced plans under way to knit together the air-defense systems of the six smaller Gulf States, including Qatar, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates, and to build a US-administered missile-defense system… One proposal calls for the US to hold combined air exercises with Oman and the UAE.”

President Bush mentioned the role of outside nations in Iraq in his January 10 speech:

We will work with others to prevent Iran from gaining nuclear weapons and dominating the region…

We will use America’s full diplomatic resources to rally support for Iraq from nations throughout the Middle East. Countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and the Gulf States need to understand that an American defeat in Iraq would create a new sanctuary for extremists and a strategic threat to their survival. These nations have a state in a successful Iraq that is at peace with its neighbors, and they must step up their support for Iraq’s unity government. We endorse the Iraqi government’s call to finalize an International Compact that will bring new economic assistance in exchange for greater economic reform…

Secretary Rice elaborated on the President’s comments in her testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on January 11:

While many of us are working to strengthen peace in the region, two governments have unfortunately chosen to align themselves with the forces of violent extremism – both in Iraq and across the Middle East. One is Syria. Despite many appeals, including from Syria’s fellow Arab states, the leaders in Damascus continue to destabilize Iraq and their neighbors and support terrorism. The problem here is not a lack of talk with Syria but a lack of action by Syria.
Iran is the other. If the government in Tehran wants to help stabilize the region, as it now claims, it should end its support for violent extremists who destroy the aspirations of innocent Lebanese, Palestinians, and Iraqis. And it should end its pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability. I repeat my offer today: If Iran suspends its enrichment of uranium – which is, after all, an international demand, not just an American one – then the United States is prepared to reverse 27 years of policy, and I will meet with my Iranian counterpart – anytime, anywhere – to discuss every facet of our countries’ relationship. Until then, we will continue to work with the Iraqis and use all of our power to limit and counter the activities of Iranian agents who are attacking our people and innocent civilians in Iraq.

Creating a “Shi’ite Crescent”?

The most serious wild card in Iraq’s immediate neighborhood is Iran. Iran already plays at least some role in the political instability in Iraq and may take a more aggressive role in trying to shape Iraq’s political future and security position in the Gulf. Some believe that the Iranians have abandoned their efforts to export their “Shi’ite revolution” to the Gulf. This view has changed since the invasion of Iraq. Officials across the Arab world, especially in Saudi Arabia and Jordan, have expressed reservation over the right of Iraqi Sunnis, Kurdish and Shi’ite dominance over the Iraqi government, and a new “strategic” Shi’ite alliance between Iran and Iraq.

Jordan’s King Abdullah has reported that that more than 1 million Iranians have moved into Iraq to influence the January 2005 Iraqi election. The Iranians, King Abdullah argued, have been trying to build pro-Iranian attitudes in Iraq by providing salaries to the unemployed. The King has also said that Iran’s Revolutionary Guards were helping the militant groups fighting the US in Iraq, and warned in an interview with the Washington Post of a “Shi’ite Crescent” forming between Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon:

> It is in Iran’s vested interest to have an Islamic republic of Iraq.

> If Iraq goes Islamic republic, then, yes, we’ve opened ourselves to a whole set of new problems that will not be limited to the borders of Iraq. I’m looking at the glass half-full, and let’s hope that’s not the case. But strategic planners around the world have got to be aware that is a possibility.

> Even Saudi Arabia is not immune from this. It would be a major problem. And then that would propel the possibility of a Shi’ite-Sunni conflict even more, as you’re taking it out of the borders of Iraq.

The same sentiment has been echoed by the former interim Iraqi President, Ghazi Al-Yawar, a Sunni and a pro-Saudi tribal leader. “Unfortunately, time is proving, and the situation is proving, beyond any doubt that Iran has very obvious interference in our business -- a lot of money, a lot of intelligence activities and almost interfering daily in business and many [provincial] governorates, especially in the southeast side of Iraq.” Mr. Al-Yawar asserted that Iraq should not go in the direction of Iran in creating a religious oriented government. He was quoted in a Washington Post interview as saying “We cannot have a sectarian or religious government… We really will not accept a religious state in Iraq. We haven't seen a model that succeeded.”

Both Iranian and Iraqi Shi’ites rejected these comments. Iran called King Abdullah’s comment “an insult” to Iraq. Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman, Hamid Reza Asefi, also called on Ghazi Al-Yawar to retract his statement and accused King Abdullah II and Al-Yawar of wanting to influence the election against Iraqi Shi’ites. Asefi said “Unfortunately, some political currents in Iraq seek to tarnish the trend of election there and cause concern in the public opinion…We expect that Mr. al-Yawar takes the existing sensitive situation into consideration and avoids repeating such comments.”
Iraqi Shi’ites also reacted to King Abdullah’s comment about the fear of a “Shi’ite Crescent.” Jordan’s King Abdullah was asked to apologize by Shi’ites. The Najaf Theological Center issued a statement, in which they accused the King of meddling in Iraq’s internal affairs:1890

Distorting the truth and blatantly interfering in Iraqi affairs, provoking tribal sentiments in the region against Iraqi Shi’ites, provoking great powers against Iraqi Shi’ites, intimidating regional countries and accusing them of having links with Iran, displaying a great tendency for ensuring Israel’s security and expressing worries about the victory of Shi’ites in the upcoming elections tantamount to insulting millions of people in Iran, who have been insulted just because they follow a religion that the Jordan’s king is opposed…

Najaf Theological Center is hopeful that the Jordanian monarch will apologize to the Shi’ites of the region and Iraq, and their religious authorities, because of the inaccurate remarks made against them.

Although no pan-Shi’ism movement existed, the invasion of Iraq instigated a large Shi’ite revival throughout the region. Most importantly, hundreds of thousands of Shi’ites from across the Arab world began making pilgrimages to holy sights in Najaf and Karbala. The unprecedented flow of Shi’ites in and out of Iraq since before Saddam Hussein’s regime offered the opportunity for networks to arise that linked Shiites across region. This network provoked King Abdullah’s comment and “raised the specter for a broader struggle for power between [Sunnis and Shi’ites] that could threaten stability in the region.”1891

The Views of the Arab Gulf States

The Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, have also made their views known regarding the unity of Iraq and their fear of Shi’ite dominance of an Arab country that allies itself with Iran. Saudi Arabia has pushed for more Sunni inclusiveness in the constitution writing process, especially after their lack of participation in the January 2005 elections.

When a draft constitution did not acknowledge Iraq’s Arab and Muslim identity, the General Secretary of the GCC called the Iraqi constitution “a catastrophe.” The Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal, also warned that if the constitution does not accommodate the Iraqi Sunni community, it would result in sectarian disputes that may threaten the unity of Iraq.1892

Prince Saud al-Faisal later urged the US to pressure Iraqi Shi’ites and Kurdish government leaders to work to bring the Iraqi people together. He said, “[Americans] talk now about Sunnis as if they were separate entity from the Shi’ite.” al-Faisal reiterated his fear of an Iraqi civil war saying, “If you allow civil war, Iraq is finished forever.”1893

Al-Faisal also predicted that a civil war in Iraq could have dire consequences in the region and indicated the Kingdom feared an Iran-Iraq alliance. The Saudi Foreign Minister asserted “We (US and Saudi Arabia) fought a war together to keep Iran out of Iraq after Iraq was driven out of Kuwait.” He added that the US policy in Iraq is “handing the whole country over to Iran without reason.” Iranians have established their influence within Iraq, al-Faisal said, because they “pay money … install their own people (and) even establish police forces and arm the militias that are there.”1894

In 2006 Saudi fears of the spread of civil war across the greater Middle East only augmented. In September the Kingdom announced plans to build a fence along their border with Iraq. The $12 billion project included plans for electronic sensors, security bases, and physical barriers. Saudis
worried in particular about the possibility of a Shi’ite uprising in the Kingdom among the minority living around the oil rich areas. Sunni extremists returning to Saudi Arabia from Iraq could also cause trouble for the monarchy. The head of the Saudi National Security Assessment Project said the barrier was needed because of the dire lack of Iraqi border patrol. Saudi leaders said that most militants traveling to Iraq go through Syria, but the new measure would primarily address the fear of an Iraqi civil war spilling into the Kingdom.1895

In addition, Saudi Arabia announced that the Kingdom opposed any official separation of Iraq into autonomous regions. The announcement came shortly after the Iraqi Parliament passed a bill allowing provinces to vote to create autonomous regions in 2008. The Saudis expressed support for Sunni legislators who had boycotted the vote, along with members of al-Sadr’s Shi’ite party and secular parties, in opposition to separation. The vote sharpened Saudi concerns about a Shi’a dominated Iraq with ties to Iran.1896

Saudi Arabia remained concerned about the spread of sectarian war across the greater Middle East. Enhanced border patrol plans were well underway as the Kingdom sought to inhibit the flow of refugees and fighters from Iraq.

Saudi government officials denied that the Kingdom was financially supporting Sunni insurgents in Iraq. However, the AP found that significant private funds were channeled from Saudi Arabia to Iraq. Iraqi officials said that insurgents used the money for expensive weapons, particularly anti-aircraft missiles. One Iraqi official said that $25million went to a Sunni cleric in Iraq.

Truck drivers interviewed by the AP said that they were asked to carry boxes of cash from Saudi to Iraq on a regular basis. They added that Saudis often used large-scale religious events – such as the hajj – to transfer the money to Iraqi hands.

A spokesman from the Saudi Interior Ministry stated, “There isn’t any organized terror finance, and we will not permit any such unorganized acts.” But intelligence showed that the money came from private donations to Islamic charities outside of governmental control.1897

The Iraq Study Group Report called Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf States “disengaged.” The report agreed that funding for Sunni insurgents came from private individuals inside the Kingdom, not from the government. The government had provided no debt relief and little economic assistance.1898

In mid December, more than 30 Islamic clerics from Saudi Arabia called on Sunni Muslims around the Middle East to support Sunni insurgents in Iraq. They said jihad, “is one of the most important tenets of religion, and what has been taken by force can only be regained by force.” Their statement warned that Shiite Muslims were taking control of Iraq in a conspiracy with the coalition forces in an attempt to marginalize Sunnis. They called on Sunnis to “stand directly with our Sunni brothers in Iraq, using all appropriate and considered forms of support” and urged clerics to “educate the public about the Shiite threat.”1899

The New York Times reported that according to American and Arab diplomats, Saudi Arabia told the US government that the Kingdom would provide financial backing to Iraqi Sunnis if full scale civil war broke out with Shi’ites, if the US pulls its troops out of Iraq. A diplomat involved said, “If things get so bad in Iraq, like an ethnic cleansing, [Saudi Arabia] will feel we are pulled into the war.”1900 The administration later disavowed the report.
In early January the Saudi crown prince, Prince Sultan Abdul Aziz, said that the US and coalition forces should “review the goals of their presence and the strategies of their remaining” in Iraq. He indicated that the coalition forces had not achieved much “positive” progress during the war. He also urged neighboring countries to “stop backing sects and political current inside Iraq.” The latter statement was clearly in reference to Iran. He warned again against the potential separation of Iraq into autonomous regions, which could threaten the rights of Sunnis.

A Clash within a Civilization?

One should not exaggerate Iraq’s role in any clash within a civilization. The more dire predictions of a clash between Sunni and Shi’ite that polarizes the Gulf and Middle East may well be exaggerated. The fact remains, however, that this is what Bin Laden, Zarqawi, and other neo-Salafi extremists are seeking. The battle in Iraq is only part of the much broader struggle by neo-Salafi extremists to capture the Arab and Islamic world. The outcome in Iraq will be critical but only part of a much broader struggle.

Nonetheless, the possibility is there, should Iraq fall into civil war or a limited civil conflict, for countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia to increase support and funding for their respective sectarian constituents in Iraq, Shi’ite and Sunni respectively. Although this would not be the type of “clash” envisioned by Islamist extremists, it could take the form of a power struggle between neighboring Shi’ite and Sunni countries that is played out in a weakened Iraqi state.

As sectarian conflict continued and efforts were stalled over forming a unity government in spring 2006, it was reported in April that intelligence officials from Arab states including Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey had met to discuss the strategic and regional implications of an Iraqi civil war and Iran’s ongoing role in the country. The revelation of this meeting came on the heels of blunt remarks by Egyptian President Mubarak that “Most of the Shiites are loyal to Iran and not to the countries they are living in,” and suggested that “Iraq is almost close to destruction.” Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish leaders quickly denounced these suggestions. Al-Jaafari expressed astonishment “that Egypt identifies Iraq’s security problems as a civil war.”

One day after Mubarak made these comments, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal said that since the definition of a civil war is people fighting each other within a country, then Iraq is in a civil war. In addition, he suggested that the Arab League undertake an effort to help address the ongoing civil conflict. He added, however, that only “Iraqis themselves can stop this fighting.”

At a British-Saudi conference, Prince Saud al-Faisal emphasized the danger posed to countries in the region by a civil war in Iraq. “The threat of break-up in Iraq is a huge problem for the countries of the region, especially if the fighting is on a sectarian basis. This type of fighting sucks in other countries,” Prince Saud said.

The Problem of Syria

Both senior US and Iraqi officials feel that Syria may overtly agree to try to halt any support of the insurgency, but allow Islamic extremist groups to recruit young men, have them come to Syria, and then cross the border into Iraq – where substantial numbers have become suicide bombers. They also feel Syria has allowed senior ex-Ba’athist cadres to operate from Syria,
helping to direct the Sunni insurgency. As has been touched upon earlier, these include top level officials under Saddam Hussein such as Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri, one of Saddam's Vice Presidents.

General George Casey, the commander of the MNF, has been careful not to exaggerate the threat of foreign interference. Nevertheless, Casey has warned that Syria has allowed Iraqi supporters of Saddam Hussein to provide money, supplies, and direction to Sunni insurgents, and continues to be a serious source of infiltration by foreign volunteers. General Casey highlighted Syria's complicity in this regard when testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee on March 8, 2005:

There are former regime leaders who come and go from Syria, who operate out of Syria, and they do planning, and they provide resources to the insurgency in Iraq. I have no hard evidence that the Syrian government is actually complicit with those people, but we certainly have evidence that people at low levels with the Syrian government know that they’re there and what they’re up to.

The US State Department spokesman described Syria's role as follows in the late spring of 2005:

I think that what we've seen, again, are some efforts, but it certainly isn't enough. We do believe the Syrians can do more. We do believe there's more they can do along the border to tighten controls.

We do believe that there's more that they can do to deal with the regime elements that are operating out of Syria itself and are supporting or encouraging the insurgents there.

And so, again, it's not simply a matter of them not being able to take the actions, at least from our perspective. Part of it is an unwillingness to take the actions that we know are necessary and they know are necessary.

In late February 2005, the Baghdad television station al-Iraqiya aired taped confessions of insurgents captured in Iraq. Many of the men, from Sudan, Egypt and Iraq, said that they were trained in Syria – at least three said they had been trained, controlled and paid by Syrian intelligence officials. They were instructed to kidnap, behead and assassinate Iraqi security forces. The majority of the men expressed remorse for their actions and said they were driven almost exclusively by monetary rewards; there was almost no mention of religious or nationalistic motivation.

Syria has repeatedly and emphatically denied that it supports or harbors any persons involved in the insurgency in Iraq. After months of American pressure and accusations, however, Syrian authorities delivered a group suspected of supporting the insurgency from Syria to Iraqi officials in February 2005. Among the captives handed over was Sabawi Ibrahim Hassan, Saddam Hussein’s half-brother and a leading financier for the insurgency. Syria’s Foreign Minister, Farouk al-Sharaa, stated that Syria was doing all that it could but that it needed equipment tailored to policing the borders, such as night vision goggles.

There have also been reports that Zarqawi obtains most of his new young volunteers through Syria, and that they are recruited and transited in ways that have to be known to Syrian intelligence. There have also been media reports that Zarqawi’s top lieutenants, and perhaps Zarqawi himself, have met in Syria for planning sessions. These reports were called into question by US intelligence assessments in June 2005.

US officials and commanders, as well as Iraqi officials, acknowledge that Syria has made some efforts to improve its border security and reduce infiltration. In summer 2005, Syrian security forces fought suspected militants, possibly former bodyguards of Saddam Hussein, for two days near Qassioun Mountain, and a sweep of the border area with Lebanon led to the arrest of some...
34 suspected militants. In a high profile case, Syria arrested a man and his brother's wife who they accused of facilitating militants' passage into Iraq. The woman admitted on Al Arabiya satellite television that the brothers had crossed into Iraq to join Saddam’s Fedayeen prior to the Coalition invasion.1911

US Central Command director of intelligence, Brigadier General John Custer acknowledged in July 2005 the moves that Syria had made as well as the problems in patrolling the border. Custer stated that Syria had bolstered the forces along the eastern border with units relocated from Lebanon. In comments that seemed to contradict what other intelligence officials had said, Custer stated:1912

I think Syria is intent on assisting the US in Iraq...[I have] no information, intelligence or anything credible [that Syria] is involved or facilitating in any way [the flow of insurgents into Iraq]... Could they do more? Yes. Are they doing more? Yes. They are working very hard. As troops have been pulled out of Lebanon, we've seen some of those troops go to the border. I am convinced that they are not only doing it along the border but are arresting people as they transit.

The British military attaché in Damascus, Colonel Julian Lyne-Pirkis, inspected the Syrian efforts at the border and agreed with Custer’s assessment. Custer suggested that the security environment on the border was a combination of a tradition of lawlessness and lack of Syrian ability to police the area, creating a greater impression of Syrian complicity than there actually was. He stated, “It’s not a question of intent—it’s simply capacity and capability. You’ve got a 600-kilometer border there, some of the toughest desert, and you have a thousand-year-old culture of smuggling. Smuggling men now is no different than smuggling men 1,000 years ago. It’s all a smuggling economy.”1913 Syria faces problems because its border forces are relatively weak, they lack training and equipment, and an earthen beam only demarcates much of the border. At the same time, they feel Syria deliberately turns a blind eye towards many operations, and the large number of Islamist extremist volunteers crossing the border.

Cash couriers bring unknown sums of cash across the border. Because Iraq’s formal financial system is still maturing, and because porous borders allow for the easy transfer of money carried across by human mules, this is an effective and preferred method for financing the insurgency from abroad. Syria is a particular concern in this regard, as identified by Daniel L. Glaser. Through various sanctions programs, the Treasury Department has targeted Syrian individuals, entities, and officials for a range of issues, including harboring assets of the former Iraqi regime, interfering in Lebanon, inadequately policing the flow of cash across its borders, and failing to implement money laundering and terrorist financing controls.1914

There have been conflicting reports over the extent of the financial ties between Syria and the insurgency in Iraq and the degree of Syrian government complicity. An Iraqi official said that Syria had agreed to turn over 3 billion dollars of money that originated with Hussein or his supporters. President Assad however reduced this number significantly to 200 million. In 2004, The US asserted that the state controlled Commercial Bank of Syria was laundering money on behalf of insurgent groups in Iraq. Another report suggests that efforts to stop the flow of money from Syria to Iraq have only accumulated one billion, and that much more is slipping by undetected.1915

Some analysts have suggested that the regime in Damascus may view the insurgency in Iraq as a means to ‘export’ their own Islamist extremists who might otherwise take aim at Assad’s secular regime (led by an Alawite minority). However, such a view, analysts say, is extremely near-
sighted as it is quite possible that extremists in Iraq could cross back into Syria, bringing practical guerilla warfare experience with them much like the Mujahedeen who fought in the Afghan war brought back to their countries of origin. Such hardened and trained militants could then pose a very serious threat to the ruling regime. As one commentator stated, “They [militants and Syria] may have slept in the same bed to fight the Americans, but what’s important for al Qa’ida is that it has entered the bedroom [Syria] and secured a foothold there.”

Indeed, such views were supported by classified CIA and US State Department studies in summer 2005. Analysts referred to the return of experienced and trained militants to their country of origin or third party country as “bleed out” or “terrorist dispersal.” The studies sought to compare the returning Mujahedeen from Afghanistan to those who fought in Iraq. Like Syria, the fighters who return with advanced warfare skills could threaten those countries. A Marine Corps spokesman pointed out that if nothing else, certain techniques such as the use of IEDs had already been transferred from Iraq to combat zones like Afghanistan. Experts, however, point to the fact that while the Afghan war attracted thousands of foreign fighters, Iraq has yet to do so, meaning that the potential number of returning veterans would be much less.

Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef echoed the conclusions of the CIA and State Department studies, pointing out that many of the terrorists that operated in Saudi from May 2003 on were either veterans of the Soviet conflict in Afghanistan, or had trained in the camps that operated until Operation Enduring Freedom eliminated them. Nayef and other Saudi officials believe that the Saudis that return from the conflict in Iraq will have skills that are even more lethal than those exhibited by the Afghan war veterans. Nayef stated, “We expect the worst from those who went to Iraq. They will be worse, and we will be ready for them.”

In a speech before the UN Security Council in May 2005, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari asked that Iraq’s neighboring states do more to prevent terrorists from crossing into Iraq. Syria figured prominently in his speech, in which he acknowledged the efforts by the government but implored the regime to make greater efforts. Zebari stated, “We have learned recently that Syria has stopped more than a thousand foreign fighters from entering Iraq from Syria. We welcome this action but note that it confirms our long-held view that Syria has been one of the main transit routes for foreign terrorists as well as for remnants of the previous regime.” Reportedly, another Iraqi official handed a list over to the Syrians that contained the names, addresses, and specific roles in planning attacks in Iraq of individuals living in Damascus. According to the Iraqi official, the Syrians ignored the list.

One senior US intelligence official echoed the foreign minister, stating, “There’s no question that Syrian territory plays a significant role with regard to how outside figures [move] into the insurgency in Iraq. The problems with the regime are a mixture of willingness and capability.”

In January of 2006, an AH-64 Apache was downed by a surface-to-air missile shot by an insurgent group led by Abu Ayman. The group reportedly had ties to Syrian intelligence and its ranks were composed at least partly by Syrian fighters. Although it is unknown if the SAM originated in Syria or Iraq, in the years before Operation Iraqi Freedom US intelligence indicated that Syria had become an entry point for eastern European military equipment, such as anti-aircraft weapons and surface-to-air-missiles, on its way to Iraq.
A Washington Post article that ran in early summer 2005 featured an interview with a proclaimed insurgent sympathizer/organizer within Syria. The man, Abu Ibrahim, made several claims about the insurgency and its relation to Syria. He dubbed Syria a “hub” for organizing insurgents, and said that when the US pressured the Syrian government in late 2004, Syrian agents took men like him into custody only to be released several days later. He openly admitted to ferrying men, weapons, and money into Iraq, as well as possibly fighting on one occasion, and stated that Syrian agents routinely tailed him but that they did not interfere with his activities. Ibrahim stated that in the early days of the war, Syrian border guards waved busloads of would-be insurgents through checkpoints and into Iraq. He remarked that he had seen a rise in the number of Saudis coming to Syria to be transported to Iraq to join the insurgency. Purportedly, a radical Syrian preacher named Abu Qaaqaa inspired Ibrahim and others. When he asked a sheik why the Syrian government had not arrested them for their activities, “He would tell us it was because we weren’t saying anything against the government, that we were focusing on the common enemy, America and Israel, that beards and epaulets were in one trench together.” Though it may be impossible to verify Abu Ibrahim’s claims, they do not appear to differ greatly from the public statements and assessments of the US military and intelligence community.

Iraq’s Interior Minister, Bayan Jabr, repeated the prime minister’s call to neighboring countries in July 2005. Jabr met with the interior ministers from Syria, Jordan, Kuwait, Iran, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia in Istanbul, and reiterated that the Iraqi government wanted the neighboring countries to do more to staunch the flow of weapons and insurgents into Iraq. The ministers released a communiqué that condemned the murder of Egypt’s ambassador, pledged to prevent terrorists from using their territories as bases and recruitment centers for terrorists, and called for the rapid exchange of information on terror suspects and their movements. Jabr, commenting before meeting with the ministers, stated, “I will say clearly in my speech about the countries – maybe without names but they know themselves – the countries who support directly or indirectly the insurgents. I will talk to these countries to stop these activities and to cut short these terrorists.”

In July 2005, the US Treasury Department announced that information obtained from Saddam Hussein’s half brother and former advisor, Sabawi Ibrahim al-Hasan al-Tikriti, (who had been captured in a raid in Tikrit four months earlier) indicated that the Tikriti family was responsible for supplying money, arms, explosives and other support to the insurgents in Iraq from bases in Syria. Shortly thereafter, the US Treasury Department announced it was blocking the assets of six of Saddam Hussein’s nephews, all sons of al-Tikriti. Stuart Levey, the US Treasury’s Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence stated, “This action targets the money flows of former regime elements actively supporting attacks against Coalition forces and the Iraqi people.” Acting Assistant Treasury Secretary Danier Glaser asserted that cash couriers from the region, Syria in particular, were the primary method for funnelling money to insurgents. He stated that large sums belonging to former Iraqi officials who are now in Syria, or who are now controlled by Syria, are responsible for much of the financing.

A number of al-Tikriti’s sons have been particularly active in financing the Iraqi insurgency. One son, Ayman Sabawi was captured in Tikrit in May. In late September Iraqi authorities announced he had been sentenced to life in prison for his role in funding the Iraqi insurgency and for bomb making. Iraqi authorities had not announced the trial had begun and the verdict, the first against a
family member of Saddam Hussein, took many by surprise.\textsuperscript{1934} Tareq Khalaf Mizal, an Iraqi militant arrested alongside Sabawi was sentenced to six years in prison for his role. Having allegedly confessed to other crimes while in detention, Sabawi is due to stand trial again in November.

A second son, Yasir Sabawi Ibrahim was arrested by Iraqi security officials in Baghdad on October 19, 2005. In a surprise twist, Damascus had “pushed” Sabawi out of Syria only a few days before. Although Syrian authorities did not hand Sabawi over to Iraqi authorities, they promptly informed US authorities about his presence in Baghdad. US officials passed the information onto the Iraqi Defense Ministry whose security forces then carried out the raid on Sabawi’s apartment. Believed to be second-in-command of the Iraqi-led insurgency (behind Younis al-Ahmad), Yasir is accused of using money from the Ba’ath Party in Syria, Jordan and Yemen to fund the insurgency in Iraq.\textsuperscript{1935} A third son, Omar, is suspected of being behind several attacks against US forces in Mosul.\textsuperscript{1936}

Despite Damascus’ role in the capture of Yasir (largely seen as a goodwill gesture towards Washington at a time of increased tensions between the two countries), a number of former Ba’ath Party leaders, including al-Ahmad, are believed to still be in Syria. But the capture of yet another nephew of the former Iraqi dictator confirmed the strong ties between members of the former President’s family and the Iraqi insurgency.

US officials commented that as of summer 2005, some intelligence showed that Syrians were providing weapons, training, money, and perhaps even “barracks-like housing” for volunteers who had made their way from Yemen, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere. Furthermore, the intelligence indicated that the makeshift staging areas for militants preparing to cross the border into Iraq had become more complex.\textsuperscript{1937} A series of Financial Times interviews with would-be militants and their families in summer 2005 revealed the extent to which Syria might be aiding the insurgency. A mother of one fighter stated, “...you go to a mosque to make initial contact. Then you are sent to a private home and from there for a week’s intensive training inside Syria.”\textsuperscript{1938} The militants who were interviewed remarked that they were trained in remote Syrian territory, close to the Iraqi border, with a focus on how to use Kalashnikovs, RPGs, and remote detonators. The fighters said that some attacks were even planned from Syrian territory.\textsuperscript{1939}

Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice both made it clear in mid-2005 that they felt that Syria continued to allow both Iraqi Ba’athist and Islamist extremist elements to operate inside Syria and across the Syrian-Iraqi border.\textsuperscript{1940} US Lt. Gen. John Vines estimated in summer 2005 that about 150 fighters crossed into Iraq from Syria each month.\textsuperscript{1941} This presented problems for both Iraqi and Coalition forces because Iraq had comparatively few border posts, many of which were isolated and had been attacked, destroyed, or abandoned.\textsuperscript{1942} A major effort was underway to rebuild them and strengthen the Iraqi border forces, but it has made limited progress, and the morale and effectiveness of these border forces is often still low.

Washington’s warnings to Damascus over border security intensified during the fall of 2005. On October 7, Syrian President Bashar Assad told the pan-Arab newspaper Al Hayat: “They (Americans) have no patrols at the border, not a single American or Iraqi on their side of the border...We cannot control the border from one side.”\textsuperscript{1943} Assad’s comments came a day after President Bush and Prime Minister Blair both issued renewed warnings against continued Syrian
and Iranian involvement in Iraqi affairs, specifically their roles in giving shelter to Islamic extremists.

A senior US official also suggested that the war might have spread beyond Iraq’s borders, telling the Financial Times “We are concerned that Syria is allowing its territory to be part of the Iraqi battlefield. That’s a choice the Syrians made. We think that is an unwise choice.” In his interview with Al Hayat, Assad said the absence of security along the border was hurting Syria and maintained “controlling it will help Syria because the chaos in Iraq affects us.” Assad said his country had arrested more than 1,300 infiltrators from Iraq since the war began. The following day, Assistant Secretary of State David Welch responded by saying the US was “ask[ing] the Syrian government not to interfere in such matters.” Welch went on to say, “It appears that they are not listening and it seems this behavior is not changing.” The rhetorical exchanges, however, did not prevent the Syrian Airlines Company from flying its inaugural post-Saddam era flight between Damascus and Baghdad on October 11. It was the first regular flight to operate between the two capitals in a quarter of a century.

On September 12, 2005, in a State Department briefing, US Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilizad said that Syria was the “number one offender” in the Middle East working to impede the success of Iraq. Khalilizad said Syria was knowingly allowing terrorists to use its territory for training exercises and permitting them to transit across Syria into Iraq and kill Iraqis. This followed the September 10, 2005 announcement by Iraqi Interior Minister Bayan Jabr that Iraq would close its border with Syria at the Rabiah crossing point near the city of Mosul, beginning the following day.

The border area around Huasaybah (Qusaybah) in Iraq has been a center for smuggling and criminal activity. Two Muslim tribes in the area – the Mahalowis and Salmanis – have long controlled illegal trade across the border and seem to permit insurgent activity with at least Syrian tolerance. The Iraqi government also proved unable to secure the area. A 400 man Iraqi unit sent in to try to secure Huasaybah in March 2000 virtually collapsed and was forced to hide out in a local phosphate plant.

The route along the Euphrates from Hit and Haditha to Ubaydi, Qaim, Kirbilah, Qusaybah, and Abu Kamal in Syria has been a center and partial sanctuary for insurgent forces and a conduit for volunteers and supplies coming in from Syria. By the spring of 2005 it became a location for some of the insurgents who fled from the fighting in Ramadi and Fallujah to regroup, prompting the US Marine Corps to launch its largest offensive since Fallujah against insurgent forces in the area. During the operations, US forces sometimes met stiff resistance from both Iraqi Sunni insurgents and Sunni Islamic extremist groups.

At the same time, the insurgents do not need major shipments of arms. Virtually anyone can go in and out, moving money and small critical supplies, and volunteers can simply enter as ordinary visitors without equipment. US Customs and Border Protection officers are working to train their Iraqi counterparts and have had moderate success in detaining potential insurgents and arms suppliers, and in breaking up smuggling rings. Another US CBP team of officers and border agents was deployed in Iraq on February 1, 2005, to assist further in the training of Iraqis. This may help, but Iraq’s border security forces have so far been some of its most ineffective units. Many of its new forts are abandoned, and other units that have remained exhibit minimal
activity. Yet, even if Iraq’s border forces were ready and its neighbors actively helped, border security would still be a problem, in part because they are often vast, uninhabited areas.

This illustrates a general problem for both Iraq and its neighbors. Iraq’s borders total 3,650 kilometers in length. Its border with Iran is 1,458 kilometers, with Jordan 181 kilometers, with Kuwait 240 kilometers, with Saudi Arabia 814 kilometers, with Syria 605 kilometers, and with Turkey 352 kilometers. Most of these borders are desert, desolate territory, easily navigable water barriers, or mountains. Even Iraq’s small 58-kilometer coastline is in an area with considerable small craft and shipping traffic, which presents security problems.

Syria has an Alawite-led regime that is more Shi’ite than Sunni, and while it sees its support of Sunni insurgents as a way of weakening the potential threat from a US presence in Syria, it also maintains ties to Shi’ite factions as well. While it may tolerate and encourage former Iraqi Ba’athist operations in Syria, and transit by Islamist extremists, Syria also maintains ties to elements of formerly Iranian-backed Iraqi Shi’ite groups like the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), Al-Da’wa and Al-Da’wa - Tanzim al-Iraq that it first developed during the Iran-Iraq War. Syria’s crack down on fighters passing into Iraq through its borders, an effort praised by US military officials, was likely the result of broader national security interests and concerns about regime stability. Indeed, despite speculation that the Syrian government was on the brink of reform, indications in early 2006 suggested quite the opposite. Far from opening the Ba’ath dominated rule to a multiparty system, Syria implemented new oppressive measures against political opponents and sought methods to co-opt religious elements of society. Fearing the gathering momentum of Islamic political parties such as Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood—each of whom had electoral victories in Palestine and Egypt respectively—the Ba’ath party of Syria attempted to head-off similar challenges in its state by allowing religious figures a greater role in government and giving them a freer hand to conduct their business among their followers so long as it does not attempt to rival the Syrian government.

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In the summer of 2006 Syria was primarily concerned with affairs to the west; the Israeli/Hezbollah conflict in southern Lebanon. By early October Syria decided to move troops from the Iraqi border to its border with Lebanon. The US had urged Syria to maintain tight border control along the border with Iraq because it was widely believed that foreign fighters entered the country through Syria. The Syrian ambassador to the US said that the nation lacked the resources to maintain forces at both borders. He criticized the US for not offering Syria any help in securing the border. He said, “At one point the US was exerting pressure on Syria that we must put more and more troops on the Iraqi-Syrian border to keep insurgents from infiltrating. That was an almost impossible task. It is not our fault that you decided to invade and occupy Iraq.” He added that Syria would be open to trade with a stable Iraq. The ambassador also expressed his concerns of spillover of civil conflict from Iraq into Syria.

On October 12, in an uncharacteristically blunt statement, US Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, accused Syria of supporting armed groups in Iraq. He said that Syria was allowing...
foreign insurgents to slip through the border. He said the Syrians, along with the Iranians, wanted a weak and divided Iraq. According to Agence France Presse, the statement was the first direct accusation from a US official to the Syrian government.

The Washington Post reported on the permeability of the Iraq-Syrian border. Iraqi officials said that as many as 2,000 people with Iraqi passports, 500 foreigners, 300 commercial trucks, 80 cars and 30 buses passed through the border checkpoint at Rabiyah on average everyday. The passport office, however, was insufficient to deal with the large numbers, according to US troops stationed in the area. A single officer kept a log of passports by hand, making it very easy to use fake passports. US troops also said that at night it was very easy to pass through the border, and it was suspected that foreigners brought hundreds of thousands of dollars with them as they passed through. General Caldwell stated that some 50 to 70 foreign fighters passed through the Syrian border every month. 400 Iraqi officers patrol the entire border, but they lack equipment and some stations do not even have electricity. American officials said that new technology, such as high tech passport technology, was due to arrive in the next 6 months. At that point, US troops believed that Iraqi border patrol forces would be “competent,” but it could be years till they could sustain themselves.

The August – November Stability and Security in Iraq Report by the Department of Defense said of Syria:

Despite repeated warnings by the United States, the Syrian regime continues to provide safe haven, border transit, and limited logistical support to Iraqi insurgents, especially elements associated with the former Iraqi Ba’ath Party. The Syrians also permit former regime elements to engage in organizational activities, such that Syria has emerged as an important organizational and coordination hub for elements of the former Iraqi regime. Syria has taken a relatively pragmatic approach in dealing with Islamic extremist groups, such as al-Qaeda in Iraq and foreign fighters; although it has detained and deported many foreign fighters, Syria has allowed other to transit to Iraq.

At the end of 2006, the US continued to back away from direct talks with Syria. David Satterfield, State Department coordinator for Iraq, said in a November 15 hearing at the Senate Armed Service Committee, “We believe the Syrian government is well aware of our concerns and the steps required to address those concerns. But Syria had made a series of choices. And the last, the most significant and negative choice, was during the Lebanon war, when Syria cast its lot, as it remains today, with Iran, with Hezbollah, with forces of violence and extremism. When that changes, we will, of course, respond.”

On November 19, Syrian Foreign Minister Waleed al-Muallem traveled to Baghdad to assure Iraq of Syria’s support. He said, “Syria’s intentions toward Iraq are good in all times, and on that principle we are looking forward to a good relationship between Iraq and Syria that takes history and common interests into consideration.” He also called for a timeline for US troop withdrawal. The following day, Syria and Iraq officially announced the restoration of diplomatic ties between the two countries after a twenty-year hiatus.

The Iraq Study Group Report made the following recommendations for a negotiated peace with Syria:

- Syria’s full adherence to the UN Security Council Resolution 1701 of August 2001, which provides the framework for Lebanon to regain sovereign control over its territory.
- Syria’s full cooperation with all investigations into political assassinations in Lebanon, especially those of Rafik Hariri and Pierre Gemayel.
• A verifiable cessation of Syrian aid to Hezbollah and the use of Syrian territory for transshipment of Iranian weapons and aid to Hezbollah.

• Syria’s use of its influence with Hamas and Hezbollah for the release of the captured Israeli Defense Force soldiers.

• A verifiable cessation of Syrian efforts to undermine the democratically elected government of Lebanon.

• A verifiable cessation of arms shipments from or transiting through Syria for Hamas and other radical Palestinian groups.

• A Syrian commitment to help obtain from Hamas an acknowledgement of Israel’s right to exist.

• Greater Syrian efforts to seal its border with Iraq.

The Problem of Iran

The role Iran plays in the Iraqi insurgency is highly controversial. Citing Iranian sources, a *Time Magazine* article stated that the Supreme National Security Council of Iran concluded in September 2002, before the US invasion, “It is necessary to adopt an active policy in order to prevent long-term and short-term dangers to Iran.”

Iran certainly has active ties to several key Shi’ite political parties. These include key elements in the Shi’ite-based United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) that emerged as Iraq’s most important political coalition in the January and December 2005 elections: the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), Al-Da’wa and Al-Da’wa - Tanzim al-Iraq. The Revolutionary Guard and Iranian intelligence have been active in southern Iraq, as well as other areas, since the early 1980s. They almost certainly have a network of active agents in Iraq at present. There are also some indications that Lebanese Hezbollah has established a presence in Iraq.

Prime Minister Allawi repeatedly expressed his concern over Iran’s actions during 2004 and early 2005, as did other senior officials in the Interim Iraqi Government who see Iran as a direct and immediate threat.

Iraqi interim Defense Minister Hazem Sha’alan said in July 2004 that Iran remained his country’s "first enemy," supporting "terrorism and bringing enemies into Iraq…I’ve seen clear interference in Iraqi issues by Iran…Iran interferes in order to kill democracy.” A few months later Sha'alan -- a secular Shi’ite who is one of Iran's most outspoken critics in Iraq -- added that the Iranians "are fighting us because we want to build freedom and democracy, and they want to build an Islamic dictatorship and have turbaned clerics to rule in Iraq.” Sha’alan made several points in a briefing on September 22, 2004:

• Iranian intervention and support of Sadr pose major threats; and some infiltration has taken place across the Syria border.

• Iran is behind Sadr. It uses Iranian pilgrims and sends arms, money, and drugs across the border.

• Iraq must have strong border defense forces. “If doors and windows are empty, no amount of cleaning will ever get rid of the dust.”

In a study of Iran’s role in Iraq, the International Crisis Group noted that an Iranian cleric and close associate of Ayatollah Sistani warned in November 2004 that: "Iran's policy in Iraq is 100 per cent wrong. In trying to keep the Americans busy they have furthered the suffering of ordinary Iraqis…We are not asking them to help the Americans, but what they are doing is not in the interests..."
of the Iraqi people; it is making things worse. We [Iranians] have lost the trust of the Iraqi people [Mardom-e Aragh az dast dadeem]." 1969

In contrast, King Abdullah of Jordan has made a wide range of charges about Iranian interference in Iraq and went so far as to charge during the period before the Iraqi election that Iran was attempting to rig Iraq’s election with up to 1,000,000 false registrations. He has since talked about the risk of an Iraqi-Syrian-Lebanese Shi’ite "axis" or "crescent."

In an extraordinary interview aired on Iraqi TV on January 14, 2005, Muayed Al-Nasseri, commander of Saddam Hussein’s “Army of Muhammad,” said that his group regularly received arms and money from both Syria and Iran. “Many factions of the resistance are receiving aid from the neighboring countries,” he said. “We got aid primarily from Iran.” 1970

On October 13, the Iraqi Interior Ministry announced that Iraqi security forces had arrested 10 Iranian “infiltrators” trying to enter the country illegally. A total of 88 suspected insurgents were arrested in the raid, including one Somali citizen. Iraqi security forces also seized a number of weapons and ammunition caches. 1971 In a similar incident in July 2005, Iraqi border guards exchanged fire with gunmen crossing into Iraq from Iran. The Iraqi security forces also uncovered a cache of explosives, timers and detonators. 1972 Such incidents, in addition to growing allegations of Iranian involvement by Baghdad and Washington, suggest that Iran may have moved from the ability to create unrest and violence in Iraq to actively supporting insurgents.

According to what several newspapers claim are classified intelligence reports, British intelligence officials suspect insurgents led by Abu Mustafa al-Sheibani are responsible for the deaths of at least 11 British soldiers in southern Iraq. 1973 An investigation of Iranian involvement in Iraq in August of 2005 by Time Magazine identified al-Sheibani as the leader of the insurgency in the south. According to the magazine, the IRGC had been instrumental in creating the al-Sheibani group and providing it with weapons and training. US intelligence officials also believe the group, estimated to number almost 300 militants, is responsible for at least 37 bombs against US troops in 2005 alone. 1974 British officials accused a second Tehran-backed militia group, the Mujahedeen for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (MIRI), of having killed six British Royal Military Police in Majar el-Kabir in 2003. 1975

In early October 2005, the British government publicly blamed Iran for the deaths of eight British soldiers in southern Iraq. Although British officials had complained to Tehran about ongoing arms smuggling across the porous Iran-Iraq border earlier in the year, this marked the first time London officially implicated Tehran in the deaths of Coalition troops. British officials accused Iran’s Revolutionary Guard of supplying advanced technology—“shaped charges” capable of penetrating even the toughest armor to insurgents in Iraq, and of trying to further destabilize the country. 1976 Echoing British accusations, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld stated that some weapons found in Iraq have “clearly [and] unambiguously” originated from Iran. 1977

The London Times in September 2005 identified at least a dozen active Islamic groups with ties to Tehran. Eight were singled out as having considerable cross-border influence: 1978

- Badr Brigades: A Shi’ite militia force of 12,000 trained by Iran’s Revolutionary Guards and blamed for a number of killings of Sunni Muslims. They are thought to control several cities in southern Iraq.
- Islamic Dawaa Party: A Shi’ite party that has strong links to Iran. Its leader, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, the present Prime Minister, has vowed to improve ties between the two neighbours.
• Mahdi Army: Received arms and volunteers from Iran during its battle against US and British troops last year. British forces in mid-September 2005 arrested the group’s commander in Basra, Ahmed al-Fartusi.


• Thar Allah (Vengeance of God): An Iranian-backed terror group blamed for killing former members of the ruling Ba’ath party and enforcing strict Islamic law.

• Jamaat al-Fudalah (Group of the Virtuous): A Paramilitary group that imposes Islamic rules on Shi areas and has attacked shops selling alcohol and music.

• Al-Fadilah (Morality): A Secret political movement financed by Iran. It is thought to have many members among provincial officials.

• Al-Quawaid al-Islamiya (Islamic Bases): An Iranian-backed Islamic movement that uses force to impose Islamic law.

A number of experts believed that Tehran-backed militias infiltrated Iraqi security forces. In September 2005, Iraq’s National Security Adviser, Mouwafak al-Rubaie, admitted that insurgents had penetrated Iraqi police forces in many parts of the country, but refused to speculate about the extent of the infiltration.1979

Some reports suggest that between 70 and 90 percent of Basra’s police force had been infiltrated by religious and political factions. The Mahdi Army in particular, was believed to have almost de facto control over the police. Not surprisingly, corruption and violence is on the rise within the force. More than 1,300 murders were documented in Basra during the first nine months of 2005, many of them allegedly by men in police uniform.1980 A second Tehran-backed group, the Badr Brigades, controlled the city’s bureau of internal affairs up until Spring 2005.1981 All in a city not considered an al-Sadr stronghold, an individual frequently associated with these groups.

There were also reports of Iranian backed-groups exerting influence over the lives of everyday Iraqis. Achieving a government job in Basra was almost impossible without the sponsorship of one of these groups. Teaching posts in local schools and universities were increasingly filled only by those deemed ideologically loyal to Iran.1982 Iranian goods flooded local markets and Farsi is becoming the area’s second language.1983

The increasing frequency of such reports in the summer and fall of 2005 led some US and British officials to conclude that Iran was backing the insurgency in southern Iraq. The exact level of Iranian influence over the Iraqi insurgency is still unknown however. Whether the Tehran regime, or elements of it, is encouraging or merely allowing attacks against Coalition troops stationed in southern Iraq is unclear.

It should be noted, however, that Iran repeatedly denied these charges. Some American experts are more concerned with the potential role Iran could play in any Iraqi civil conflict, or its influence over a Shi’ite political majority in office, than with direct Iranian support of a Shi’ite insurgency.

As General George Casey put it, “I don’t see substantial Iranian influence on this particular government that will be elected in January. I see Iran as more of a longer-term threat to Iraqi security…a long-term threat to stability in Iraq. If you look on the other side, I think Syria is a short-term threat, because of the support they provide to Ba’athist leaders operating inside and outside of Iraq.”1984
The nature of Iranian involvement in Iraqi politics was multifaceted. Many of the Iraqi exile groups and militia members that lived in Iran before the fall of Saddam Hussein were never particularly grateful to Iran during the time they had to remain in exile and are not pro-Iranian now. The Ayatollah Sistani, Iraq's pre-eminent Shi‘ite religious leader -- as well as virtually all of the influential Iraqi clergy except Sadr -- was a quietest who opposes the idea that religious figures should play a direct role in politics.

Moreover, the Grand Ayatollah Sistani rejected the religious legitimacy of a velayat-e faqih or supreme religious leader like Iran's Khameni. The major Iraqi Shi‘ite parties that did operate in Iran before Saddam's fall did endorse the idea of a velayat-e faqih while they were dependent on Iran, but have since taken the position that Iran should not be a theocratic state, much less under the control of an Ayatollah-like figure. Iran’s aims in Iraq may not be to secure a religious theocracy akin to its own, but merely to assure a Shi‘ite backed Baghdad government friendly to Tehran.

The analysis of the International Crisis Group, and of many US experts in and outside Iraq interviewed for this report do not support the existence of any major Iranian effort to destabilize or control Iraq through June 2005. However, the present and future uncertainties surrounding Iran’s role can scarcely be ignored. Iran does seem to have tolerated an Al Qa’ida presence in Iran, or at least its transit through the country, as a means of putting pressure on the US in spite of the organization’s hostility toward Shi‘ites. Iran may have been active in supporting groups like Al Ansar in the past, or at least turning a blind eye, and may allow cross border infiltration in Iraq's Kurdish region now.

In July 2005, Kurdish intelligence officials asserted that Ansar was based primarily in Iran and that attacks in the Kurdish areas could only have occurred with Iranian support. According to an Iraqi Kurdish reporter, the Iranian cities of Mahabad and Saqqiz are centers where Ansar recruited among the Iranian Kurds. Such claims cannot be independently verified.

Iran has not been, and never will be, passive in dealing with Iraq. For example, it sent a top-level official, Kamal Kharrazi, to Iraq on May 17, 2005 -- only 48 hours after Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had left the country. Kharrazi met with Prime Minister al-Jaafari and Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari. He also met with other top officials and key members of the Shi‘ite parties. His visit was at a minimum a demonstration of Iran’s influence in an Iraq governed by a Shi‘ite majority, even though some key Iraqi Shi‘a parties like Al Dawa have scarcely been strong supporters of Iran. Kharrazi also gave an important message at his press conference, “…the party that will leave Iraq is the United States because it will eventually withdraw…But the party that will live with the Iraqis is Iran because it is a neighbor to Iraq.”

In summer 2005, the Iraqi and Iranian ministers of defense, Sadoun Dulaimi and Adm. Ali Shamkhani, met and concluded a five point military agreement. The meeting, however, produced conflicting statements as to what had been agreed upon. The Iranian minister, Shamkhani, asserted that as part of the deal Iran would train a number of Iraqi troops. His counterpart, Dulaimi, however, stated that the Iraqi government was satisfied with the Coalition efforts and that Iran would not be training Iraqi troops. Iran would, however, be providing $1 billion in aide that would go towards reconstruction. Dulaimi conceded that some would go to the Ministry of Defense.
Several high level meetings between Iraqi and Iranian officials took place in the fall of 2005. Iraq’s deputy minister, Ahmed Chalabi met with Iranian officials in Tehran only days before traveling to the United States to meet with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. The timing was seen by many as odd given accusations in May 2004 by US officials that Chalabi gave Iran classified information. 

In mid-November, Iraq’s National Security Adviser Mowaffaq al-Rubaie traveled to Tehran. While there, he signed a memorandum of understanding with the Iranian government committing the two governments to cooperate on sensitive intelligence-sharing matters, counter-terrorism and cross-border infiltration of Qa’ida figures. The agreement took Washington by surprise: US Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad told reporters he found out about the agreement only afterward. 

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani traveled to Iran in late November, becoming the first Iraqi head of state to do so in almost four decades. Talabani spent three days in Iran and met with both Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Rubaie, who accompanied Talabani on the trip, told reporters he asked the Iranians to use their influence with Damascus to secure Syrian cooperation in sealing off the Iraqi border to insurgents. In their meeting, Khomeini told Talabani that foreign troops were to blame for the ongoing violence and urged the Iraqi president to tell the occupiers to go: “The presence of foreign troops is damaging for the Iraqis, and the Iraqi government should ask for their departure by proposing a timetable...the US and Britain will eventually have to leave Iraq with a bitter experience.”

According to Talabani, Khomeini promised to support the Iraqi president’s efforts to end the insurgency. With regard to Iraq, Khomeini told the official IRNA news agency: “Your security is our own security and Iran honors Iraq’s independence and power...We will extend assistance to you in those fields.” But Khomeini made a point of denying any responsibility for the violence next door, saying: “Iran considers the United States to be responsible for all crimes and terrorist acts in Iraq and the suffering and misery of the Iraqi people.”

Another high-profile Iraqi visit to Tehran took place on November 27 by Vice-President Adel Abdul-Mahdi. Abdul-Mahdi met with his Iranian counterpart, Vice President for Executive Affairs Ali Saeedlou to discuss the implementation of accords reached earlier in the month. Together, these visits seemed to mark a sign of improving relations between the two countries in late 2005.

As mentioned above, Iran’s influence in Iraq is not just of a political or military nature, but economic as well. In addition to Iranian government aid allotted for reconstruction, Iranian businessmen have reportedly invested heavily in restoring their neighbor’s infrastructure. Nonprofit groups headquartered in Iran also helped to provide basic services to Iraqi’s during the chaos that followed the toppling of Saddam and dissolution of the Ba’athist government. One NGO established in Tehran with ties to the Iranian government, “Reconstruction of the Holy Shrines of Iraq,” claims that it has completed more than 300 construction, cultural and religious projects in the country. Another group, the Organization of Ahl-ul-Bait, whose leadership is comprised of Iranian mullahs, has sent ambulances, doctors and teachers into Iraq.

New complaints regarding Iranian interference in Iraq were leveled again in March by Secretary Rumsfeld, who accused Iran of deploying its Revolutionary Guard to Iraq. He said that Iran was
“putting people into Iraq to do things that are harmful to the future of Iraq,” and that it was something that Tehran would “look back on as having been an error in judgment.” That same month, President Bush asserted that “Tehran has been responsible for at least some of the increasing lethality of anti-coalition attacks by providing Shi’a militia with the capabilities to build improvised explosive devices in Iraq.”

US Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad made similar allegations. He accused Iran of publicly supporting Iraq’s political process while it clandestinely trained and aided Shi’ite militia groups as well as Sunni insurgent organizations such as Ansar al-Sunna. He stated that, “Our judgment is that training and supplying, direct or indirect, takes place, and that there is also provision of financial resources to people, to militias, and that there is a presence of people associated with the Revolutionary Guard and with MOIS.”

In late June, General George Casey stepped up allegations of Iran’s support for violent Shiite groups in Iraq, implicating Iran in supplying insurgents with the weaponry and training to confront US forces. He said that the American forces “are quite confident that the Iranians are providing weapons, improvised explosive devices (I.E.D.), technology and training to Shia extremist groups.” One indication of Iranian support is the increase in the number of attacks with bombs that feature shaped charges, which focus the explosive power in a single direction.

Casey also noted that extremist groups are conducting training in Iran, and in some cases, probably Lebanon, indicating that they “are using surrogates to conduct terrorist operations in Iraq.”

Khalilzad’s comments came as the US and Iran announced that they had agreed to hold direct talks for the first time on how to reduce the violence in Iraq. These talks, scheduled to take place in Iraq, were at the request of SCIRI leader, Abdul al-Hakim, who had solicited Iranian assistance in the past. Ambassador Khalilzad, who had also reached out to Tehran’s leaders, was to receive the Iranian negotiators when they arrived.

Both sides came to the talks with minimal expectations. In addition, US officials remained adamant that the discussions would be narrowly focused on Iraqi security issues and would not include the Iranian nuclear program. In statements leading up to the talks, it appeared Tehran saw them as an opportunity to change Washington’s behavior, while the US indicated that Iran’s desire to meet was an indication that it was realizing that its defiant posture was not working.

Iran’s chief nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani, made the announcement to the Iranian parliament saying “I think Iraq is a good testing ground for America to take a hard look at the way it acts…If there’s a determination in America to take that hard look, then we’re prepared to help.” He went on to indicate that Iran was willing to help the US in Iraq, but only under the condition that the “United States should respect the vote of the people. Their Army must not provoke from behind the scenes.”

Yet US officials such as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice emphasized that the negotiations would only focus on Iraq. National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley added optimistically, however, that Iran was “finally beginning to listen.”

The announcement of these negotiations drew a strong condemnation from The Iraqi Consensus Front, Iraq’s dominant Sunni political party. In a statement it called the negotiations “an obvious
unjustified interference,” and added “It’s not up to the American ambassador to talk to Iran about Iraq.”

iran faces a dilemma. It benefits from US support for Iraq to help it deal with the insurgency and provide economic aid. Yet, it fears being "encircled" by the US presence in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Gulf. Iranian officials have threatened to destabilize Iraq if the US brings military pressure against Iran because of its alleged nuclear weapons program. A split in Iraq's government could lead some Shi'ite factions to actively turn to Iran for support, and the divisions in Iran's government create the ongoing risk that hard-line elements might intervene in Iraq even if its government did not fully support such action. In early 2006, however, these seemed to be risks rather than realities.

By summer 2006 it became clear that the US had overestimated the divisions between Iranian and Iraqi Shi'ites. Shi'a in both countries were more concerned about returning Sunni domination in Baghdad, rather than the two country’s previous differences. The flow of pilgrims from Iran to Shi’ite holy sites in Najaf and Karbala in 2006 further strengthened ties between the two countries. The US had assumed that the new Shi’ite dominated government in Baghdad would challenge Tehran, and clerics in Najaf would challenge Ayatollah Khomeini in Qom; however, trade increased substantially between the two countries, and clerics in Iraq did not speak out against Iranian politics, for fear of disrupting the newfound Shi’ite unity in the region. The continued Sunni insurgency also presented a common threat that unified rather than divided Tehran and Baghdad, particularly at a time when support for the US was falling and attacks on Shi’ite militias were rising. It thus appeared in 2006 that ethnic antagonisms would bow to connections between the two Shi’ite communities. Both countries clearly understood that security of the region was paramount.

In August Chatham House released a report on Iran in which it asserted, “the great problem facing the US is that Iran has superseded it as the most influential power in Iraq.” The report argued that Iran had great influence in the South since “every Shi’a party in Iraq now has strong links with Tehran.” In addition to this influence, Iran also exerted pressure in the north because of its concerns about controlling the Kurdish situation. The report suggested that Iran’s increased importance in the region meant that while the Iraqi government would continue to formally adhere to US wishes, it would have to begin to take more actions aimed at appeasing Iran.

In the early fall, the US continued to accuse Iran of supporting Shi’ite militia groups. A September GAO report cited the Director of National Intelligence as saying that Iran “provided guidance and training to select Iraqi Shi’a political groups and provided weapons and training to Shi’a militant groups to enable anti-coalition attacks.” According to the report, Iran also aided in the creation of IED’s used by Shi’ite militias in Iraq. The alleged support of militias reinforced Sunni fears of Iranian and Shi’ite domination in Iraq and propagated sectarian violence.

A senior military official confirmed the results of the GAO report. He said that Iran sent “millions of dollars” to al-Sadr’s Mahdi army as well as the rogue elements that Sadr no longer had control over. Coalition and Iraqi troops had found Iranian surface to air missiles, anti-tank rockets, and explosively formed projectiles (EFPs). The anonymous official said, “The control of military grade explosives in Iran is controlled through the state apparatus… It is a deliberate decision on the part of elements associated with the Iranian government to affect this type of activities.”
However, British military efforts failed to find evidence that Iran was supplying Iraq with weapons. British Defense Secretary Des Browne said, “I have not myself seen any evidence – and I don’t think any evidence exists – of government supported or instigated’ armed support on Iran’s part in Iraq.” Yet, US Maj. Gen. Caldwell said that although Iran had not sent fighters to Iraq, the Republic provided arms and training to Shi’ite militias.

During Prime Minister’s Maliki’s visit to Tehran, the Iraqi leader discussed the security situation with Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The two leaders expressed cooperation following the meeting and Mr. Ahmadinejad said, “Iran will give its assistance to establish complete security in Iraq, because Iraq’s security is Iran’s security.” Yet to many, particularly Sunnis in Iraq, the forms in which that assistance and security would come were unclear. In another meeting, Ayatollah Khomeini told Mr. Maliki, “part of Iraq’s sufferings have been due to the actions of the former regime and part is due to the presence of occupiers in Iraq,” hinting that Iran wanted to see the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq.

Iran’s Foreign Minister also criticized the US’s role in Iraq; “The Americans have been after securing their illegitimate objectives, none of which have been in line with the Iraqi nation’s interests, or the improvement of Iraq’s friendly relations with its neighbors.” He said that he hoped the relationship between Iran and Iraq would improve, relying on “joint stands, beliefs, and faith.”

On October 12 the US Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, accused Iran, along with Syria, of supported armed groups in Iraq. He said in the Agence France Press article that Iran trained and equipped Shi’ite militia groups and was fueling the ongoing sectarian violence in Baghdad. Both the US and Iraqi governments had accused Iran of arming rebels, but this was the first direct statement from the Ambassador against Iran. It was thus obvious in the early fall that the Bush administration was not recruiting the support of Iran and Syria in stabilizing Iraq.

Gen. Michael Hayden, Director of the CIA, told the Senate Armed Services Committee on November 15 that “The Iranian hand is stoking violence and supporting, even competing, Shi’a factions.”

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in November, “There’s no lack of opportunity to talk to the Iranians. The Question is: Is there anything about Iranian behavior that suggests that they are prepared to contribute to stability in Iraq? And I have to say that at this point I don’t see it.” The US remained adamant that Iran would have to stem their nuclear ambitions before talks could take place.

On November 26 Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said that Iran would help the US in Iraq if President Bush stopped “bullying” his country. He said, “You went to Iraq to topple Saddam and find weapons of mass destruction, but it was clear to us that you came in order to dominate the region and its oil. You have been trapped in a quagmire and locked in your place with nowhere to go. The Iranian nation is ready to help you get out of the quagmire – on condition that you resume behaving in a just manner and avoid bullying and invading.” It seemed unlikely at the end of 2006 that the US would accept blame for the “quagmire” in Iraq and thus Iranian cooperation would be minimal at best. Iraqi President Jalal Talibani was scheduled to travel to Tehran that same weekend, but his trip was postponed by the closing of Baghdad’s airport after mass bombings in Sadr City.
When Talibani did travel to Iran the following week, Ahmdadinejad pledged his support to Iraq in helping to stabilize the country. Ayatollah Khomeini also told Talibani that it was Iran’s religious and human duty to help Iraq restore security. He added that US policies were to blame for the crisis and that the coalition had no hope of succeeding in Iraq.

The *Iraq Study Group Report* called for Iran to take several important steps to help quell violence in Iraq:

- Iran should stem the flow of equipment, technology, and training to any group resorting to violence in Iraq.
- Iran should make clear its support for the territorial integrity of Iraq as a unified state, as well as its respect for the sovereignty of Iraq and its government.
- Iran can use its influence, especially over Shia groups in Iraq, to encourage national reconciliation.
- Iran can also, in the right circumstance, help in the economic reconstruction of Iraq.

The US continued to accuse Iran of propagating violence in Iraq. The Pentagon’s August-November Stability and Security Report said of Iranian foreign influence in Iraq:

The Iranian government sees an unprecedented opportunity to bring Iraq into its sphere of influence and to prevent it from re-emerging as a threat to Iranian interests. Tehran also views the situation in Iraq through the prism of Iran’s ongoing tension with the United States and the West – especially the continued presence of US forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Persian Gulf, which threatens to constrain Iran’s regional ambitions. Iran seeks to ensure that the Coalition bears political, economic, and human casualty costs to deter future US regional intervention. To achieve these objectives, Iran continues to pursue a dual-track strategy of supporting Shi’a unity and a stable government in Iraq – either a functioning, unified Shi’a dominated central government or a federated state – on one hand, while facilitating militia activities in Iraq on the other. Iran has developed links to southern Iraq and the Kurdish region to facilitate access and perhaps to safeguard its interests in case Iraq were to split into a collection of sectarian enclaves.

Other sources blamed the US as well. A Crisis Group report said that the Iran had thus far been unable to have a stabilizing effect in Iraq largely because of the “conviction in Tehran that Washington is seeking to build a hostile regional order.”

Iran rejected the US charges. It said in December that it was already helping to stabilize Iraq and that there did not need to be an agreement with the US. The Iranian ambassador to Iraq, Kazemi-
Qomi, said that Iran supported all Iraqis, not just Shi’a. He appeared disinterested with discussions in Washington over negotiating with Tehran, but clearly believed that a stable Iraq was in the best interest of Iran. “Security in Iraq will strip foreign troops of any pretext to prolong their presence in the country,” he said. “Security in Iraq will deprive terrorists of any safe haven, and we will no longer see an influx of Iraqi [refugees] to Iran.”

More than words were involved. In late December US forces captured several Iranians in Iraq, acting on intelligence that they were plotting attacks against Iraqi civilians and US and Iraqi forces. Two of them were released because they had diplomatic credentials, but at least four others were still being held. The White House said, “We suspect this event validates our claim about Iranian meddling,” but the US did not offer the evidence for the Iranians’ capture. A British official told the BBC that five of the men still held were intelligence officials who were “up to no good,” and were in Iraq to influence Prime Minister Maliki.

The Iranian government condemned the arrests and said that they could have “unpleasant consequences.” A spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry said that President Talabani invited the two diplomats and four others to Iraq. The spokesman added, “The Iraqi government is responsible for their release, and the occupying forces should be held responsible based on international regulations.”

On January 11, 2007 US raided an Iranian consulate in Irbil, Iraq. Iranian news reported that US forces took custody of five individuals and seized computers and documents. The US military did not confirm the raid, but said it had taken six people in Irbil into custody for being tied to attack on US and Iraqi forces. The Iranian government said it was up to the Iraqi government to secure their release. It was the second arrest of Iranians by US forces in less than two weeks, and greatly heightened tensions with Iran.

Iraq’s Foreign Minister, Hoshyar Zebari, a Kurd, said that the seized Iranians were working in a liaison office that had government approval and was in the process of being approved as a consulate. He also said that US forces tried to capture more people at the airport in Irbil, prompting a confrontation with Kurdish troops. “We don’t want Iraq to be a battleground for settling scores with other countries,” Zebari told CNN. The US Embassy said it was assured the building was not a consulate. Zebari also said several days later that Iraq planned to create more Iranian consulates in Iraq and hoped to increase the number of border entrance points between the two countries.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said that the attacks against Iranians in Iraq were part of a broad military offensive against foreign interference ordered by President Bush in the fall of 2006. Secretary of Defense Gates said that in no way was the US trying to pull Iran into direct conflict and that US forces would not cross the border into Iran to apprehend individuals. A military official also confirmed that one of the Iranians captured and released in Baghdad was a member of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Quds Force.

General George Casey also said in a Press Conference, “I don’t think there’s any disagreement on the fact that these folks we have captured are foreign intelligence agents in [Iraq] working with Iraqis to destabilize Iraq and target coalition forces that are here at Iraq’s request.” The Iraqi stance on the US initiative against Iranians in Iraq was unclear, but Secretary Rice – in an interview with the BBC on January 12 - made it obvious that the US would continue to pursue “these networks.”
Despite continued allegations of weapons transfers and Iranian meddling in Iraq, the US government had not provided significant evidence to support these claims. A British officer operating out of Basra said, “We do have intelligence which suggests that weapons and ammunitions are being smuggled in from Iran… We don’t always manage to find any.” US military officials in Diyala also said that they had yet to seize munitions or personnel at the border.2030

The Problem of Turkey

The Kurdish issue in Northern Iraq has two major implications for Turkey. First, Ankara is concerned about activities of Kurdish separatist groups in Northern Iraq, whose chief objective is an independent Kurdistan in and around Turkey. Turkey is engaging in heavy diplomacy with both the US and Iraqi administrations to crack down on these organizations and eliminate the Kurdish rebels which were launching attacks into Turkish territory. This long-standing concern is the primary reason for the presence of Turkish intelligence and military units in Northern Iraq since the Gulf Operation.

Second, Turkey has consistently opposed strong autonomy for a Kurdish zone within Iraq, out of the fear that it would create unrest and aspirations for independence among Turkey's own Kurdish population. Given the rich water supplies in the Kurdish populated regions of Turkey and the colossal irrigation project (the Southeast Anatolian Project) that Turkey has invested in for over four decades, an autonomous Turkish Kurdistan is out of the question for Turkish policy-makers.

In summer 2005, Kurdish PKK rebels launched a series of attacks on Turkish forces allegedly from bases in northern Iraq. In two months, more than 50 Turkish security forces were killed in attacks, mostly in the form of planted IEDs, a weapon utilized widely by Iraqi insurgents.

In July 2005, the Turkish Prime Minister threatened cross-border action against the rebels if the attacks did not stop, though such action is generally regarded as extremely provocative and even illegal. Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated, however that “There are certain things that international law allows. When necessary, one can carry out cross border operations. I hope that such a need will not emerge.”2031

Exacerbating the debate about cross border operations were the conflicting reports that the US, who considers the PKK a terrorist organization, had ordered the Turkish military to capture the organization’s leaders. A member of the Turkish military stated that the US had agreed to seize the leaders while US military spokesmen were unaware of such an agreement.

The official US position seemed to be that the US opposed any cross-border action as an infringement on sovereignty and likely to incite further violence between the Kurds and the various sects opposed to their independence or autonomy. Furthermore, the US made it clear that any discussion over the PKK should center on the Iraqi government. US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Richard Myers stated, “I think the difference now is that they [Turkey] are dealing with a sovereign Iraqi government, and a lot of these discussions will have to occur between Turkey and Iraq, not between Turkey and the United States.”2032

Despite the present tension in US and Turkish ties, and Turkey’s relations with Iraq, Turkey is significantly involved in post war reconstruction in Iraq. Turkey also offered to assist with the training of Iraqi police forces. One example Turkish effort to help the creation of a stable and
unified Iraq was a meeting held in April 2005 in Istanbul where all Iraq’s neighbors, Egypt and Bahrain convened to address issues related with cross border insurgency and terrorist infiltration.

In September 2006 Turkish authorities visited Kirkuk in northern Iraq to express support for the Turkoman minority. The Turkoman population had been complaining of increased sectarian prejudice from the Kurdish majority. They were particularly concerned that the Kurds would try to incorporate Kirkuk into the autonomous Kurdish region in the north – claiming rights to the vast oil fields underneath the city. The constitution that the Kurdish regional government presented to Parliament in September did include Kirkuk, but any breakup of Iraq was officially postponed until 2008. The Turkish delegation warned the provincial council that it was Turkey’s right to protect the minority in Kirkuk. They said that Turkey would not interfere militarily, but added “Turkey is keen to preserve the territorial integrity of Iraq, but it is our right as a neighboring state to have a presence in Iraq just as the Americans have a presence.” Clearly these statements were contradictory as the American presence was predominantly military.

In the fall of 2006 Turkey continued to threaten action in northern Iraq against PKK rebels if Baghdad and Washington refused to curtail PKK activity. The US and Iraq appointed envoys to address shutting down PKK activity, but not before the rebel group declared a unilateral ceasefire. Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan was under pressure at home to reduce the threat before elections in 2007.

**The Problem of Jordan**

Some analysts believed that a limited number of insurgents were crossing into Iraq from Iraq-Jordan border. Most Arab Jordanians are very much opposed to the rise of a Shi’ite dominated Iraq.

While commentators focus on the fact that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is a Jordanian, it should be noted that the Jordanian government has sentenced Zarqawi to death in absentia on multiple occasions. Though there may be some Jordanians involved in the insurgency, Jordan has been very cooperative in its efforts to train Iraqi police and to monitor its borders.

The Jordanian government has trained a good number of the Iraqi security forces and is very much concerned with extreme Islamist elements within its own territory. King Abdullah has pledged to train over 30,000 Iraqi military and police within Jordan and on January 13, 2005, the 12th class graduated its training bringing the total to almost 10,000 Iraqi security forces trained in Jordan since efforts began. There have, however, been incidents involving insurgents and terrorists within Jordan’s borders. In spring 2004, a plot to create a massive chemical-laced explosion over Amman by radical Islamists was uncovered and disrupted by the Jordanian security forces.

On August 19, 2005, Katyusha rockets were fired at two US warships in Jordan’s Red Sea Aqaba port. None of the rockets struck the ship. One hit a warehouse, killing a Jordanian soldier; another exploded near a Jordanian hospital, resulting in no casualties; and the third landed outside of Eilat airport in neighboring Israel, but failed to explode. The Iraqi branch of Al Qa’ida, linked to Jordanian Abu Masab al-Zarqawi, claimed responsibility for the attack. Four days later, Jordanian officials arrested a Syrian man, Mohammed Hassan Abdullah al-Sihly, who they accused of carrying out the attack. Police said three accomplices slipped across the border into Iraq. Jordanian Interior Minister Awni Yirfas confirmed his government was working with Iraqi authorities in order to capture the militants.
In summer 2005, Jordanian forces broke up an alleged recruitment ring in Amman. According to the main defendant, Zaid Horani, he and several other Jordanians crossed into Syria and boarded buses in Damascus, Syria that were bound for Iraq as the Coalition forces invaded. Horani apparently returned home and helped to organize a recruitment pipeline for Jordanians interested in joining the insurgency in Iraq. Figuring prominently in the case was a Syrian, Abu al-Janna, who was allegedly the point of contact in Iraq for the Jordanians. Al-Janna is reportedly a central figure in the regional terror network.

A Jordanian, Raad Mansour al-Banna, is the main suspect in the suicide bombing of a police recruitment site in Hilla in February 2005, killing more than 125. On August 21, 2005, Laith Kubba, spokesman for Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, accused Jordan of allowing the family of Saddam Hussein to finance the insurgent campaign in Iraq in an effort to reestablish the Ba’ath Party in that country.

As already discussed, none of the bombers involved in the November 9 hotel bombings in Amman were Jordanian, but rather Iraqi nationals. It is possible that Zarqawi drew on his own connections in Jordan to carry out the attacks. There are some 400,000 Iraqis living in Jordan, some of whom have ties to Salafi jihadists in Iraq and might be willing to help carry out operations in Jordan. Jordanian officials, including King Abdullah II, have refused to rule out the possibility that Jordanians may have been involved in the attacks. In the days following the bombings, Jordanian security officials arrested 12 suspects, mostly Jordanians and Iraqis.
XVI. Iraqi Views of the Threat

Iraqi views of the threat can be useful indicators of the country’s status and the direction it may be heading. The U.S. cannot win the “hearts and minds” of Iraqis. Effective Iraqi governance and forces and the true key to any solution to the insurgency and finding a solution will depend primarily on whether Iraqi’s can work inclusively to address issues of national concern.

At the same time, it is difficult to determine Iraqi attitudes and how they view the insurgency. There is no single Iraqi view of any major issue that affects Iraq. Iraqis disagree on details regarding almost all of the issues covered in this analysis. Sometimes they presented very different views of how serious they took the threat from Syria and Iran, how and whether they quantified various threat forces, and how serious they saw given extremist, terrorist, and insurgent elements. As the political process and insurgency have continued, Iraqi’s have also differed over its implications and significance for their lives and the future of Iraq.

Iraqis and the Coalition have often judged the insurgency differently. Throughout the conflict Iraqi officials have felt MNSTC-I estimates of the insurgent threat were misleading because they seemed to only include hardcore insurgents. Some felt that the Minister of Defense was generally correct in including some 200,000 sympathizers in one guess at the threat. They agree with his statement that, “It does no one any good to deny the insurgents have major public support, particularly in Sunni areas. Our political problem is much more important than our military one.”

If one focuses solely on the Sunni insurgency, Iraqis have seen the same four broad groups of insurgents as the US and MNSTC-I:

- **Zarqawi and Outside Islamist Extremist Organization Fighters:** Composed of mostly foreign Arabs and from other countries. They cannot be quantified, but their numbers are small and probably well under 1,000. The problem is their methods of attack have great impact.

- **Former Regime Elements (FRE)s:** Large numbers, and a mix of true supporters of the Ba’ath, alienated Sunnis, paid volunteers, temporary recruits, and other Iraqis. There is no way to quantify them, but some feel it is in the 15,000 to 30,000 level depending on how one estimates full time and part time fighters.

- **Iraqi Native Islamist Extremist Organization Fighters:** This group is small with numbers probably well under 500. Their methods of attack can mirror image outside extremists and have great impact.

- **Organized Crime:** The major source of violence and insecurity in at least 12 of the 18 governorates. Criminals often seem to cooperate with terrorists and insurgents. The seriousness and severity varies, but numbers of criminals and their incidents are very high, as is impact.

Iraqis, however, see far more Iraqi popular hostility to the Coalition forces and “occupation” than many US officials and officers. From the start of Coalition occupation, they saw the deployment of Iraqi forces as a critical step in winning popular support for the new government, and as vital in Shi’ite areas as well as Sunni. They did not agree on how quickly the Coalition should phase down its role, but they have broadly agreed that the Coalition is part of the problem and not simply part of the solution.

Iraqis also continue to differ over just how serious the problem of Shi’ite attacks and reprisals was becoming, and over the extent to which Shi’ite actions were helping to divide the country along sectarian lines. Shi’ites have tended to focus on the Sunni threat. Many Sunnis who have supported the interim Iraqi government, or former officials in it, have felt Shi’ite elements of the Ministry of Interior forces and the various Shi’ite and Kurdish militias were becoming a serious
problem. Some accused the Shi‘ite militias of atrocities against Sunnis, and both Sunni and Shi‘ite Arabs accused the Kurdish leadership and Pesh Merga of supporting ethnic cleansing in the north, though the details were unclear.

Iraqi public opinion has increasingly been divided along ethnic and sectarian lines, but Iraqis have consistently had mixed feelings about the war, the Coalition, and the insurgents. In general, Iraqis have tended to oppose the Coalition, rather than support the insurgents – particularly Sunni Islamist extremists.

**Iraqi Attitudes in 2005**

The polls conducted during the first year after the invasion generally did not ask questions about the insurgency. They did, however, provide a consistent warning about the lack of popularity of the war and the Coalition:

- First poll conducted in Iraq in August 2003 by Zogby International, revealed that just over 50 percent of Iraqis felt that the U.S. will “hurt” Iraq over the next five years and that a slightly higher number thought “democracy is a Western way of doing things and it will not work here.” Some 31.6 percent felt that Coalition Forces should leave within six months; 34 percent said within one year; and 25 percent within two years. In addition, just fewer than 60 percent felt that Iraq should determine its political future alone and without the help of the Coalition.

- Some of these findings were substantiated by a poll conducted in May 2004 by BBC, ABC News, the German network ARD and NHK in Japan. Among these: while more than half said that life was better a year ago under Saddam, “only 25 per cent expressed confidence in the US/UK occupation forces and 28 per cent in both Iraq’s political parties and the CPA.”

- USA Today/CNN/Gallop polls published in April 2004 revealed further developments in Iraqi perceptions of U.S. policy, presence and operations. Among these was that “53 percent say they would feel less secure without the Coalition in Iraq, but 57 percent say the foreign troops should leave anyway”, while 71 percent of the respondents identified Coalition troops as “occupiers.”

- In the 29 April 2004 USA Today poll cited earlier, many Iraqis considered American troops to be arrogant and insensitive:
  - 58 percent said [Coalition Forces] soldiers conduct themselves badly or very badly;
  - 60 percent said the troops show disrespect for Iraqi people in searches of their homes, and 42 percent said U.S. forces have shown disrespect toward mosques;
  - 46 percent said the soldiers show a lack of respect for Iraqi women; and
  - 11 percent of Iraqis say Coalition Forces are trying hard to restore basic services such as electricity and clean drinking water.

- US/Oxford polls showed 78 percent of Iraqis had no confidence in Coalition forces in October 2003 and 81 percent in June 2004 – and this figure included the Kurds.

While such polls, and all polls since, raised serious issues about the adequacy of the sample, methods, and the quality of the questions asked, the results of such polls were consistent enough to provide a clear warning that only an Iraqi government and Iraqi forces would be perceived as legitimate, and a Coalition occupation might well be a prelude to civil war.

Iraqi attitudes did not change markedly during the course of the following year. Polling did, however, begin to ask serious questions about the insurgency and not simply about attitudes towards the new Iraqi government and Coalition. While many aspects of the polling remained
uncertain, the Department of State found in the fall of 2005 that Iraqis differed strikingly over their attitudes towards the insurgency depending on whether insurgent attacks struck at Coalition forces or Iraqi civilians.

The results of these polls are summarized in Figure XIV.1. They show that Iraqis did not support insurgent attacks designed to provoke a civil war or attack Iraqi civilians, but differed along sectarian and ethnic lines when it came to attacks on Coalition forces. Strikingly, many in Shi’ite as well as Sunni areas approved of insurgent attacks on Coalition forces.
Figure XIV.1: Iraqi Perceptions of Insurgents

How would you describe the perpetrators of the recent violence against Iraqi civilians?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>South</th>
<th>Mid-Euphrates</th>
<th>Tikrit/Baqubah</th>
<th>Kirkuk</th>
<th>Mosul</th>
<th>Kurdish Areas</th>
<th>Baghdad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Terrorists</strong></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criminals</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mercenaries</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Patriots</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Freedom Fighters</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Don’t Know/No Answer</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How Would You Describe the perpetrators of the recent Violence against Multinational Forces?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Terrorists</th>
<th>Criminals</th>
<th>Mercenaries</th>
<th>Patriots</th>
<th>Freedom Fighters</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Don’t Know/No Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Euphrates</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tikrit/Baquba</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirkuk</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosul</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurdish Areas</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Survey was conducted on October 24-27, 2005.
The same report measured Iraqi confidence in the Iraqi security forces by region as of October and November. It focused on whether the individual polled would support or oppose himself or herself, or someone they knew joining the Army or police force. The results clearly showed deep sectarian and ethnic divisions. Shi’ite and Kurds generally supported the Iraqi security forces. Many in Sunni and mixed regions showed deep distrust.

These results in Figure XIV.2, and provide a powerful warning about just how important making the Iraqi government and Iraqi forces inclusive is in defeating the insurgency. They also provide a warning that many Sunni Iraqis fear that the Iraqi forces do support the Shi’ites and attacks on Sunnis, and fear that Iraqi forces might divide and become Shi’ite and Kurdish forces in an intense civil war.
Figure XIV.2: Iraqi Support and Confidence in the Iraqi Army

How much confidence do you have in the Iraqi Army to improve the situation in Iraq?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Great Deal</th>
<th>Fair Amount</th>
<th>Not very much</th>
<th>None at all</th>
<th>Don’t know/no answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Euphrates</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurdish Areas</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tikrit/Baquba</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirkuk</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosul</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Would you support or oppose that you, or one of your household, join the new Iraqi Police?

What the Elections Did and Did Not Show About the Prospects for the Insurgency versus Iraqi Political Unity

One also needs to be extremely careful about concluding that the December 15, 2005 election weakened popular support for the insurgency. The December 2005 ABC-Time-Oxford Research International polling results found that Sunni attitudes on security versus those of other ethnic and sectarian groups as follows:

“Sixty-one percent of Iraqis now say they feel security is better than it was before the war; that represents a 12 percent increase since we last asked, and a fairly startling counterweight to the prevalent view in the press. Having said that, these numbers are driven almost entirely by Shi’ites and Kurds who were treated so brutally under Saddam Hussein.

“...By contrast, among Iraq’s Sunnis — for whom “security” was almost ironclad under Saddam — a whopping 90 percent report their security is worse today. In 2005, the majority of insurgent attacks have been concentrated in four of Iraq’s 18 provinces, which are home to roughly 45 percent of the country’s population: Ninevah, Al Anbar, Baghdad and Salah ah Din. Attacks have focused primarily on members of the Iraqi Security Forces, members of the Multinational Forces, Iraqi civilians and government officials — as well as foreign diplomatic and media personnel.”

The ABC-Time-Oxford Research International polling results also found that only 43% of Sunnis described life as good versus 86% for Shi’ites. Only 9% of Sunnis felt things in Iraq were going well versus 53% for Shi’ites. Only 7% of Sunnis felt the US had a right to invade versus 59% for Shi’ites. Only 11% of Sunnis said they felt “very safe” versus 80% for Shi’ites.2043

Sunni faith in the Iraqi Army fell by 13% between mid-2004 and the winter of 2005, while Shi’ite faith increased by 22%. In December 2005, Sunnis were 50% less confident in the army than Shi’ites and 23% less confident in the police.

Iraqis entered the election without broad Sunni support for the draft constitution and the Iraqi government. Only 27% of Sunnis approved the constitution versus 82% for Shi’ites. And, only 37% of Sunnis were confident in the Army versus 87% for Shi’ites. These figures are striking because the poll could not fully sample the Sunni areas were support for the insurgency was strongest.

Sunni attitudes were particularly polarized in Al Anbar, the western province where the insurgency is strongest. Only 1% of those polled felt the US invasion was a good thing, and no respondent placed any faith in US or Coalition forces. Nearly 50% of those polled in Al Anbar called instability their greatest problem. This was more than 17% more than in the other Sunni provinces. Only 13% said their local security situation was good, and only 28% expected it to improve. Only 20% of those polled approved of the new constitution, although 60% did believe the December 15, 2005 elections would produce a more stable government.

Indicators: Voting in the four most troubled provinces where the insurgency has the most support (Anbar, Salahuddin, Nineveh, and Diyala)

The results of the election did to some extent show that the more centrist Sunnis, and more “nationalist” Sunni insurgent movements, were stronger than the hard-line neo-Salafi religious
extremist movements who opposed voting. Sunni voting levels were relatively high, particularly compared to past Sunni participation.

It should be noted, however, that some insurgent organizations and many Sunni leaders opposed to federation and the constitution in its current form did call for participation. Voters can remain opponents and insurgents.

(i) Some insurgents and pro-insurgents voted simply to create a counterweight to the Shi’ites and Kurds. One can still support violence and vote.

(ii) Voting pro-Sunni did not mean willingness to accommodate the new government; that will depend on the efforts over the months that follow to define the constitution and the way in which the new government operates.

(iii) Such voting did not mean support for the US or Coalition. The December 2005 ABC-Time-Oxford Research International poll showed Iraqi Sunnis still decisively reject a US and Coalition role in Iraq. It also reveals they have serious mistrust about the new Iraqi government and armed forces.

Moreover, the ABC analysis of the December 2005 ABC-Time-Oxford Research International poll found that Sunnis saw a steady deterioration in their provinces when they were asked about whether conditions were good.

**Figure XIV.3: Are Local Conditions Good? Change in Results from 2004 to 2005**

(In Percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area Polled</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Shi’ite</th>
<th>Sunni</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Kurdish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall conditions of life</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+21`</td>
<td>-26</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime Protection</td>
<td>+13</td>
<td>+7</td>
<td>-22</td>
<td>+45</td>
<td>+13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>+12</td>
<td>+22</td>
<td>-19</td>
<td>+29</td>
<td>+14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs</td>
<td>+12</td>
<td>+31</td>
<td>-12</td>
<td>+16</td>
<td>+9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The final election results were certified on February 9, 2006. They confirmed the fact that the United Iraqi Alliance, the Shi’ite coalition party won 5.2 million votes and 128 out of 275 seats in the new parliament. The Kurdish Alliance won 2.6 million votes and 53 seats. The Sunni dominated Iraqi Accordance Front won 1.8 million votes and 44 seats in parliament. The Sunni Iraqi National Dialogue Front, a coalition of Sunni groups with nearly 500,000 votes and 11 parliamentary seats.

Although charges of fraud delayed the final certification, incidents were found to be minor and did not change the initial results. The final result allocated seats to the main parties as follows: Shi’ites 47%, Kurds 19%, Sunnis 20%, and Allawi’s secular nationalists 9%. Sunni parties got roughly the same number of seats as the Kurds, and the Shi’ites and Kurds did not get the 184 seats they needed to have the two-thirds majority necessary to form a new government, or to ignore the Sunnis.
These results scarcely indicate whether Sunnis, and others who object to the results, will actually participate in the new government and/or support a peaceful political process. Furthermore, they strongly indicate that any government that did not act as a national unity coalition, or emphasize unity and inclusion, could trigger serious ethnic cleansing or civil war. At the same time, the results do act as another indication that extreme insurgents lack broad support even among Sunni Arabs.

The key Sunni parties included two very different kinds of coalitions:

- **Iraqi Accord(ance) Front, Iraqi Consensus Front, or Tawafoq Iraqi Front**: This list, led by Adnan al-Dulaymi, has three predominantly Sunni parties and largely supports the constitution:
  - General Conference of the People of Iraq (GCPI), led by Adnan al-Dulaymi
  - Iraqi Islamic Party, led by Tariq al-Hashimi

- **Iraqi Front for National Dialogue or Hewar National Iraqi Front**: Salih al-Mutlaq heads this list and split the Iraqi Dialogue Council because he opposed the constitution. The list includes the following political groups:
  - Christian Democratic Party led by Minas al-Yusufi
  - Arab Democratic Front led by Fahran al-Sudayd
  - National Front for a Free and United Iraq led by Hasan Zaydan
  - United Sons of Iraq Movement led by Ali al-Suhayri.
  - Iraqi National Front

The Iraqi Islamic Party that had supported the constitutional referendum divided long before the election. Adnan al-Dulaymi’s General Conference of the People of Iraq and the NDC agreed to merge with the Islamic Party to form the Iraqi Accord Front. Al-Mutlaq split with the National Dialogue Council (NDC) and some smaller parties under the name the Iraqi Front for National Dialogue. The Association of Muslim Scholars refused to participate on the grounds that multinational forces should first announce a timetable for withdrawal.

In any event, the Iraqi Front for National Dialogue got 500,000 votes and 11 parliamentary seats. The Iraqi Accord(ance) Front or Tawafoq Iraqi Front got 1.8 million votes, or 19% of the total national vote, and 44 seats in parliament. This result was particularly important since the key party in this group was one of the few Sunni parties to openly endorse the constitution. Political factions such as the Iraqi Front for National Dialogue or Hewar National Iraqi Front were more hostile to it.

If one compares the vote for these two parties by governorate, the results were mixed. The Iraqi Accord(ance) Front or Tawafoq Iraqi Front got 74% of the preliminary vote in Anbar, 19% in Baghdad, 37% in Diyala, 6% in Kirkuk, 37% in Nineveh, and 34% in Salahaddin. The Iraqi Front for National Dialogue or Hewar National Iraqi Front got 18% of the preliminary vote in Anbar, 10% in Diyala, 14% in Kirkuk, 10% in Nineveh, and 19% in Salahaddin.

**Indicators: Nationalist versus Sectarian and Ethnic Parties**

The results showed that Iyad Allawi and the Iraqi National List or National Iraqi List, #731 got a relatively limited level of support: 9% in Babil, 14% in Baghdad, 11% in Dyala, 12% in Karbala, 8% in Najaf, 11% in Nineveh, 9% in Qadisyyah, 11% in Salahaddin, 5% in Theqar and 8% in Wasit. This was not a bad result in national terms, but scarcely the result that made the party the key power broker some of its leaders hoped.
Allawi’s party made complaints about the electoral process similar to the Sunnis. Many of the expectations this group might do well, however, were based on the attitudes of elites in the Baghdad area, and not on the realities of a divided Iraq. The results were also tainted by personal attacks on Allawi. The campaign led to an increasingly bitter set of exchanges between Allawi and leading Shi’ite politicians in the UIA, and even to threats by the Badr Organization to overthrow any Allawi government that emerged out of the election. Allawi had received money from the CIA during his opposition to Saddam Hussein, and he was attacked during the campaign as a tool of the US.

Moreover, as has been touched upon earlier, many Iraqis saw a need to vote an ethnic or sectarian ticket in this election rather than risk “wasting” their vote on a minority party. They did so even though the new ABC-Time Oxford Research International poll did not show strong support for religious government. ABC reported that, “Preference for a democratic political structure has advanced, to 57 percent of Iraqis, while support for an Islamic state has lost ground, to 14 percent. The rest, 26 percent, chiefly in Sunni Arab areas, favor a ‘single strong leader.’

**Indicators: Voting in the Kurdish Areas**

The Kurdish Alliance won 2.6 million votes and 53 seats. These results provided a strong indication of Kurdish strength, and the two main Kurdish political parties in the ruling Coalition of Barzani and Talibani -- the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) -- seem likely to emerge with around 20 percent of the vote. They also succeeded in dominating the Kurdish vote in the election and keeping smaller parties like Islamic Union from winning a meaningful number of seats.

The voting did not reveal how many Kurds still wanted independence, the level of tension in the Kurdish dominated areas over issues like oil and Kirkuk, the level of tension between the Barzani and Talabani factions, or the level of tension with other ethnic groups like the Turcomans.

Accordingly, the results did not serve as a prediction of how the Kurds will behave, and be treated, in the very different government that must emerge out of the elections. Even before the election, Jalal Talabani said the presidency would be a hollow part of the new government structure. Arab Shi’ites may become more interested in compromise with Arab Sunnis than with the Kurds.

The flow of money that previously kept the KDP and PUK unified to the extent there had only been minor armed clashes is also uncertain. The Kurds face serious revenue issues as oil for food and aid phase down. They already lost most of their revenue from smuggling shortly after Saddam fell when the CPA virtually abolished most Iraqi tariffs.

**Non-Indicators: Shi’ite Intentions and Unity**

The United Iraqi Alliance, the Shi’ite coalition party won 5.2 million votes and 128 seats in the parliament. This vote showed that the UIA was clearly the dominant party. Ahmed Chalabi did not succeed in capturing a large part of the Shi’ite vote or convincing other groups he stood for an effective secular or national program. His new party only captured a token vote in most areas.
At the same time, the results did not provide a picture of how flexible or inclusive the main Shi’ite parties will be, or how the Shi’ite parties will behave after the Coalition departs from Iraq.

The present Prime Minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, was seen as both popular and weak, but no clear alternative has as yet emerged. Many felt that Deputy President Adel Abdul Mahdi had emerged as a strong potential leader. In fact, al-Jaafari won the position of Prime Minister by only one vote. Much of this had to do with the legislative seats held by supporters of al-Sadr, who threw their support behind al-Jaafari giving him the narrow victory. Still, much depends on how the election results for the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) are translated into actual decisions about its leadership and how it will behave.

As has been discussed earlier, national polls before the election showed less support for a religious type of government at the national level, and local reporting shows some dissatisfaction with local religious governments. However, hard-line Shi’ite factions control Basra and a significant part of Baghdad, and even if the national leaders have cohesive positions, it is not clear how well they will speak for local government and politics in the Shi’ite dominated provinces.

The United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) will probably remain an umbrella coalition of Shi’ite parties after the election. Its status, however, is much more uncertain than in the January 2005 election. The key parties still in the UIA are the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and the Islamic Al-Da’wah or Dawa Party; members of cleric Moqtada al-Sadr’s movement and these parties have many internal tensions. For example, one Sadr supporter, Fattah al-Shaykh, seems to have dropped out because of Sadr’s, failure to adopt a decisive stand “on participation in the elections.” A number of former UIA participants have left to form or join other parties and coalitions.

Key UIA leaders like the Moqtada Al-Sadr and Abdul Aziz Al Hakim differed sharply over critical issues like federation. Sadr strongly opposes it, and Hakim strongly favors it. Sadr is always an explosive political uncertainty, and has reasserted himself as a major political voice in Baghdad, Basra, and elsewhere as well as a major anti-US voice. Hakim’s post election political role could be particularly critical because he is the leader of the Shi’ite Islamist Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), and plays a major role in the actions of the Badr Organization, which is blamed for many of the Shi’ite attacks on Sunnis. He also has ties to the present Minister of the Interior, who is blamed for tolerating some of the abuses by government prisons and the special security units.

Ahmad al-Chalabi’s Iraqi National Congress and the Constitutional Monarchy Movement were part of the UIA in the last election but left to form the National Congress Coalition. It is too soon to count out the ever-ambiguous Ahmad Chalabi, but he did not do well in any area in Iraq, and could not win a personnel seat in the election in the Baghdad governorate.

Another uncertainty is the future role of the most important unelected figure in Iraq, the Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani. Sistani’s role may be particularly critical in deciding how seriously Shi’ites pursue separatism under the guise of federation, versus inclusive politics and national unity.
The Impact of Iraqi Opinion on the Insurgency at the end of 2005

If one looks at these popular attitudes, and the political and military history summarized in Chapter II, it is clear that 2006 could be a year that resulted in successful political compromise and further progress in developing Iraqi forces. At the same time, if Iraqi politics fail, the divisions sectarian and ethnic divisions between Iraqis are so serious that it could also result in the division of both the country and Iraq’s forces, and make the US presence and advisory effort difficult to untenable.

The one thing that seems certain from such polls, and the history and nature of the insurgency to date, is that success for either the government or insurgents will be relative.

Iraq will not emerge as an example to the region. In fact, virtually any form of compromise that most Shi’ites, Sunnis, Kurds, and other minorities can accept will good enough to be defined as “success.” Any Iraqi force development effort that avoids the division of the regular armed forces, ends most abuses in the Ministry of the Interior and security forces, makes the police more professional and neutral, and gradually limits the role of the militias will also be success. It has become all too apparent that “victory” for the Coalition is the art of Iraqi compromise, and that the goal of “transforming” Iraq into some shining example to the region was always little more than a neoconservative dream.

The alternative, however, is not victory for the insurgency. The polls confirm the fact that the Sunni insurgents are a divided minority within a minority who has serious support from only a relatively small part of Iraq’s population. Insurgent success, could lead to national paralysis, civil war, or separation, and might well trigger a major Shi’ite and Kurdish offensive against Sunnis that might take years to defeat the Sunni insurgency but do immense damage to Iraqi Sunnis in the process and leave them a weak and poor minority.

Hardline Insurgents Act Independently of Iraqi and Iraqi Sunni Popular Opinion

The probable outcomes of the fighting, and Iraqi popular attitudes, however, have at most had a limited impact on Sunni Islamist extremists. Insurgencies are inevitably driven by minorities and true believers that are convinced that the people should follow them and will in time. The strategy of hard-line Sunni Islamist insurgents is unlikely to change. From the viewpoint of hard-line insurgents, there are still good reasons to block the creation of a stable coalition that includes Arab Sunnis, Arab Shi’ites, and Kurds, and block every efforts to make an inclusive coalition government successful.

Iraqis clearly do not want civil war. From the hard-line insurgent perspective, however, what Iraqis and Iraqi Sunnis want may often be irrelevant. Bloody attacks on Shi’ites and Kurds, and civil war, remain the best way to do this regardless of what most Iraqis, and Iraqi Sunnis, think. So is attempting to discredit the whole process of governance by exploiting political and economic vulnerabilities like the rise in fuel and gas prices in late 2005, and attacking/threatening refineries to make things worse. At least for the near term, the primary goal of hard-line insurgents is logically to disrupt coalition building and discredit the government.
For Some, Joining the Political Process Can Be a Tactic to Support the Insurgency

Where Sunni insurgent groups may differ in response to Iraqi popular attitudes is over the need to create and maintain a Sunni popular base and attack/discredit Sunnis moving towards compromise. This did not make sense during the elections. Security was at an all time peak that US and Iraqi forces could not sustain.

Giving Arab Sunnis legislative power made sense to at least some Sunni insurgents as long as those elected used it to check Shi’ite power and limit coalition building. Zarqawi and Al Qa’ida still opposed the elections, but others were willing to wait and intimidate the Sunnis who gained office, exploit charges of election fraud, and make it clear that it was safe to oppose coalitions and compromise within the political system, but not to oppose the insurgency.

If one “red teams” insurgent motives at the start of 2006, there were also reasons for insurgents to be more optimistic about what they might accomplish during the coming year that might counter the successes in Iraqi politics and force development:

• The insurgents showed by early January that they still could mount large numbers of attacks. The Coalition forces stressed that the number of attacks has risen, but that successes had dropped. It was far from clear this is true if one considered the impact of the successful attacks, and such claims ignored the key point that the insurgents were still strong enough for the number of attacks to increase.

• Some key aspects of the fracture lines between Sunni and Shi’ite were still growing. The Arab Sunni vs. Arab Shi’ite and Kurd tensions in the security forces were gradually becoming more serious, although the US and UK were making major new efforts to control and ease them. Sectarian divisions within the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior continued to grow. The new army continued to become steadily more Shi’ite and there were still growing problems in promoting Sunni officers. The police remained divided along sectarian and ethnic lines.

• Rushing new Iraqi units into the field, many in areas where they created sectarian friction, was increasing these problems.

• The election was proving to be highly controversial among Sunnis, with all kinds of charges and conspiracy theories. Many who voted, voted against the constitution and as a check to the growth of Shi’ite and Kurdish power.

• It was clear than any new Iraqi coalition that did emerge would be inherently unstable even if it did include Sunni groups that were willing to compromise. The new Iraqi government faced at least 6-8 months in which ongoing political debates had to occur over federation, control of oil resources and revenues, power of taxation, allocation of government funds, role of religion in government and law, and virtually every other “hot button” issue.

The tragedy of this strategy is that a failure by the new Iraqi government, and/or the division of the new Iraqi forces, almost certainly means that most Iraqi Sunnis will suffer more than the Shi’ites and Kurds. They will live in the area where the real fighting takes place, their economy will continue to deteriorate, and they will get little oil money and few government services. There is no charismatic Iraqi Sunni leader; radical insurgents like Zarqawi and Al Qa’ida can only disrupt the nation, not lead Iraq’s Sunnis. The insurgents only have limited foreign support, the hard-line insurgents are a distinct minority within the Sunni majority, and most of the successes in building up the new Iraq forces are real enough so that alienating the Shi’ites and Kurds might well backfire if the country did divide into more serious civil conflict.
The tragedy for Iraq is that this simply may not matter to hard-line Sunni insurgents. At least some would welcome a divided Iraqi as a means to their broader goal of weakening moderate regimes throughout the region and polarizing its people in ways that push Sunnis toward Islamist extremism. In any case, the immediate goal of many insurgents is not to win, or to implement a given program (most such insurgents have no coherent practical program). It is rather to deny victory and success to the newly elected Iraqi government and push the US and Coalition out in a war of attrition. From a “red team” view, this goal must still seem all too possible and most insurgents seem to be acting on this strategy.

**Iraqi Views Winter-Spring 2006**

The election left many fault lines that the insurgency can exploit in the future. It did not resolve any major issue confronting the Iraqi people. It was not a “turning point,” but a “trigger.” It instead started a political process that will determine, during the course of 2006, whether Iraq has a solid chance of emerging out of its present turmoil with stability, as well as the success or failure of the Coalition in Iraq.

Instead, the elections created the following schedule for political action, and for insurgent efforts to attack the political process and intensify civil war:

- Final voting results expected in first week of January
- 15 days after the final election results are announced, the newly elected Council of Representatives (National Assembly in the old government) meets for the first time. It is supposed to elect a speaker.
- The Council of Representatives must then negotiate among its members, without a clear deadline, to elect a Presidential Council with a president and two deputy presidents. They must be approved by two-thirds of the Council of Representatives. (This allows a Sunni, Shi’ite, and Kurd to share the presidency, but this is not required.)
- 15 days after the Council of Representatives approves the Presidential Council, it is supposed to agree on a prime minister (in practice, chosen by the major parties). The Presidential Council must unanimously approve the choice.
- No more than 30 days later, the new Prime Minister is to announce his cabinet.
- The Council of Representatives must then begin a four-month review of the constitution.
- The Council of Representatives must approve any amendments by a majority. (Goes up to two-thirds after four months.)
- Two months later, the nation votes on a revised constitution.

During the six to ten months following the December 15, 2005 election, the newly elected Iraqi assembly must form a government, transform vaguely defined political parties and coalitions into specific courses of action, allocate power by ethnic or sectarian faction, and come to grips with all of the issues raised by the constitution. If they succeed in creating an inclusive structure in virtually any peaceful form, Iraq succeeds. If they fail, the Coalition fails almost regardless of its military success, and that of the new Iraqi forces, and Iraq will move towards division, paralysis, civil conflict and/or a new strongman.
**Iraqi Attitudes Towards Iraqi Forces and US Withdrawal and Military Assistance**

These issues again are reflected in Iraqi opinion polls conducted in early 2006. The coalition forces had very uncertain popularity in Iraq – a result consistent with all previous polls from late 2003 onwards. As Figure XIV.3 shows, some 47% of all Iraqis approved attacks on US-led forces, versus 7% approved attacks on Iraqi forces and roughly 1% attacks on Iraqi civilians. Some 41% of Arab Shi’ites, 16% of Kurds, and 88% of Arab Sunnis approved of attacks on US led forces.

Almost all Iraqis wanted US-led forces to leave Iraq: 35% wanted withdrawal by July 2006, and 70% wanted withdrawal in two years. Once again, however, there are striking differences. Only 22% of Arab-Shi’ites wanted the US to withdraw in six months, although 71% wanted withdrawal in two years. Some 13% of Kurds wanted the US to withdraw in six months, and only 40% wanted withdrawal in two years. In the case of Sunnis, however, 83% wanted the US out in six months and 94% in two years. When the question was asked differently, Iraqis seemed somewhat less divided. A total of 29% were willing to wait and only reduce US forces when the situation improved in the field. This included 29% of Arab Shi’ites, 57% of Kurds, and 29% of Arab Sunnis. This at least in part reflected concerns about the quality of Iraqi forces.

Iraqis praised the US force development effort more than they praised any other aspect of the US assistance effort, but such praise was relative. Only 33% felt the US was doing a good job. Another 44% approved but thought the US was doing a poor job, and 23% disapproved. Again, major differences occurred by sect and ethnicity: Some 54% of Kurds felt the US was doing a good job, 42% approved but thought the US was doing a poor job, and only 9% disapproved. In the case of Arab Shi’ites, however, only 37% felt the US was doing a good job, 52% approved but thought the US was doing a poor job, and 11% disapproved. And, in the case of Arab Sunnis, only 6% felt the US was doing a good job, 20% approved but thought the US was doing a poor job, and 74% disapproved.

As a result, Iraqis had very mixed views about how soon Iraqi forces would be ready to take over the mission. The poll found that 35% of all Iraqis wanted US-led forces to withdraw in six months (83% Sunnis), and 35% more in two years (11% Sunnis). Iraqis also were relatively confident about the impact of such withdrawals. Some 35% thought US withdrawals would increase the number of violent attacks (13% Sunnis), 34% thought crime would rise (12% Sunni), and 33% though interethnic violence would increase (18% Sunnis). A total of 73% felt US withdrawal would increase the willingness of factions in the national assembly to cooperate (62% Kurd, 69% Arab Shi’ite, and 87% Arab Sunni.)

At the same time, only 39% felt Iraqi forces were ready to deal with security challenges on their own (38% Sunni). A total of 21% felt Iraqi forces would need help from outside forces for another year (21% Sunnis). A total of 26% felt Iraqi forces would need help from outside forces for two years (31% Sunnis), and a total of 12% felt Iraqi forces would need help from outside forces for three years or more (5% Sunnis).

The good news for both Iraq’s political and force development is that there is far more unity about avoiding attacks on Iraqi forces and civilians. Only 7% of Iraqis approved attacks on Iraqi forces and 93% disapproved. Even among Sunnis, only 24% “approved somewhat,” and 76% disapproved, of which 24% disapproved strongly. When it came to attacks on Iraqi civilians,
99% disapproved. So few Sunnis approved that the results for "approve" were not statistically meaningful. Nearly 100% disapproved, of which 95% disapproved strongly.
Figure XIV.4: Iraqi Attitudes Towards the Security Situation in Iraq in Early 2006
(Support Shown in Percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attacks on US Forces in Iraq</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Kurd</th>
<th>Shi’ite Arab</th>
<th>Sunni Arab</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Approve</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve Somewhat</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disapprove Somewhat</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disapprove</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attacks on Iraqi Government Forces</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Approve</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve Somewhat</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disapprove Somewhat</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disapprove</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attacks on Iraqi Civilians</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Approve</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve Somewhat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disapprove Somewhat</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disapprove</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Should the New Iraqi Government Ask the US to Do About US-led Forces?</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Withdraw all in 6 months</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gradually withdraw in 2 years</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce only as security</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Would the US Withdraw in 6 months If asked by Iraqi government?</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Would</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would Not</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How Capable are Iraqi Security Forces?</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong enough now</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still need foreign help</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much Longer Will Iraqi Forces Need Foreign Help?</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years or more</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: the percentages for “Refused/Don’t Know” are all 5% or lower and are not shown.

Factors Shaping Attitudes Towards the Insurgency and Government

Figure XIV.5 summarizes the results of a post-election poll in early January. Some 93% of Arab Sunnis felt Iraq was headed in the wrong direction versus 36% of all Iraqis, and only 16% of Arab Shi’ites and 23% of Kurds – although 40% of Iraqi minorities did feel the same as most Sunnis. Some 94% of Arab Sunnis thought the elections were not “free and fair” versus only 33% of all Iraqis, 11% of Shi’ites, and 19% of Kurds.

Sunnī attitudes were generally far less favorable towards the government and the elections than Shi’ites and Kurds. The poll found that, “The contrast among Sunnis is stark: Only 27 percent approve of the constitution; 48 percent say they are confident regarding the elections; and only 12 percent believe the government has done a good job.” It also found that Sunni confidence in the elections was just 48% versus 80% elsewhere.

Support for democracy is also an issue. When Sunnis were asked their current preference for a type of government, only 38% favored democracy versus 57% for all Iraqis, 75% in mixed areas like Baghdad, 63% in Kurdish areas, and 45% in Shi’ite areas. As the table below shows, the poll found that Sunnis had a more favorable attitude towards democracy when they looked five years into the future. It also found, however, that Sunnis were still much more likely to prefer a strong leader for life over democracy than other Iraqis.

It also seems likely that those Sunnis who favored democracy sometimes did so more because they opposed an Islamic state they felt would be dominated by Shi’ites than because of any basic faith in democracy. Some 88% in Sunni governorates also favor a unified Iraq versus only 56% in Shi’ite provinces, but this again seems likely to reflect a fear of the loss of oil wealth, power, and isolation as well as a deep belief in national unity.

Still, since from March 2005 until March 2006, Iraqi support for violent attacks on civilians continually declined and my March 2006, 97% of Iraqis surveyed, according to the Pentagon’s status report, viewed them as unjustifiable. Additionally, 96% of Iraqis said that attacks against ISF were unjustified. The danger of this poll however was that it did not break down these views by either sect, ethnicity or region and thus does not give a reliable portrayal of the true state of affairs. While it can probably be said that the vast majority of Iraqis do not support attacks against their fellow citizens, given the continued attacks against civilians and Iraqis, some segments of the population in various locales must support these efforts, passively or actively. The source of the survey is obscured and is simply referred to as “Nationwide Survey” and the methods and sampling techniques used are left out of the report. General questions about violence against civilians do not produce meaningful results about more specific sectarian and ethnic fears, anger, and hatred.
Figure XIV.5: Iraqi Political Divisions by Iraqi Ethnic Group and Arab Religious Sect

Iraqi Attitudes Towards the Security Situation in Iraq: Early January 2006
(Support Shown in Percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Kurd</th>
<th>Shi’ite Arab</th>
<th>Sunni Arab</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraq is:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headed In Right Direction</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headed in Wrong Direction</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Elections Were:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free And Fair</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Free and Fair</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Parliament Will Be Legitimate:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will Not</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffering From Ousting of Saddam Was:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worth It</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Worth It</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Small percentages of don’t know and refused to answer are not shown.


(In Percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Iraq Needs in Five Years</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Shi’ite</th>
<th>Sunni</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Kurdish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic State</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stronger Leader</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABC News Poll: Where Things Stand, “Poll Finds Broad Optimism in Iraq, But Also Deep Divisions Among Groups,” ABC News, December 23, 2005. Graph XI.6 shows the level of confidence the Iraqi people had in the government to improve the situation Iraq as of March 2006. Although it is not broken down by sect, ethnicity or region, more than 70% of those polled in the provinces of Karbala, Babil, Dahuk, Arbil, Sulamaniya, Najaf, Qadisiyah, Dhi Qar, Wasit and Basra said they had a “great deal” or “some” confidence in the government. In Baghdad and Maysan, between 60 –60.99% polled gave the same response and in the Sunni areas of Anbar, Ninewa, Salah ad Din, Tamim and Diyala, fewer than 50% had confidence in the government. 2051 Although this gives some indication of the divisions of opinion along ethnic and sectarian lines, it does not indicate to what depth Sunni confidence in the government has sunk, as it only indicates less than 50% gave positive responses.
As the DoD report also notes, between August 2005 and March 2006, the number of Iraqi’s who believed “strongly” or “somewhat” that the national government was leading the country in the right direction fluctuated between 60-66%. Those who “strongly” disagreed or “somewhat” disagreed remained at about 27% over the eight-month period. Those who did not know of did not answer stayed at about 10%. The breakdown by province is exactly the same as the survey displaying Iraqi confidence in their government (shown above).

This raises the question that if Iraqis really believe in a national unity government, why are all of the Sunni governorates reflecting less than 50% confidence in the government’s ability to improve the government? The reality behind these poll results at best seems to be that Shi’ite perceptions of political dominance, and Kurdish perceptions of having won a major role, create broad, vague feelings of support that are really factional and not national. Lumping the results together to produce one nationwide result is meaningless.

Figure XIV.6: Iraqi Confidence in Government to Improve the Situation: March 2005-March 2006

The poll results dealing with whether the “national government is leading the country in the right direction (by province) are somewhat similar, but produce some very strange results in the case of one key province. Do the people of a province as troubles as Basra, with a government that is virtually independent of central control, really have 70% confidence in the national government? If so, what on earth do they actually have confidence in?

Iraqi confidence in provincial government's ability to improve the situation is shown in graph XI.7 below. Since March of 2005, the percent of those that responded in the affirmative has experienced a slow but steady decline. Again these numbers were broken down by province. Those provinces where were 70% of respondents had a “great deal” or “some” confidence in the local government were Dahuk, Arbil, Sulamaniyah, Babil, Wasit, and Najaf. In Qadisiyah, Dhi Qar and Basra between 60-69.9% gave positive responses. In Karbala, Salah ad Din and Muthanna, 50-59.9% of respondents had confidence in the local governance and in Ninewa, Tamim, Diyala, Anbar, Maysan and Baghdad fewer than 50% had confidence in the provincial government.2053

Figure XIV.7: Iraqi Confidence in the Provincial Government to Improve the Situation:
March 2005-March 2006


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Insurgent Capability to Exploit the Lack of Popular Support for the US and Coalition Forces

The mid-December ABC-Time Oxford Research International poll provided a strong warning that voting will not mean an endorsement of the US and Coalition, regardless of what faction Iraqis vote for. ABC summarized the results as follows:

“...Half of Iraqis now say it was wrong for U.S.-led forces to invade in spring 2003, up from 39 percent in 2004.

“The number of Iraqis who say things are going well in their country overall is just 44 percent, far fewer than the 71 percent who say their own lives are going well. Fifty-two percent instead say the country is doing badly.

“There’s other evidence of the United States’ increasing unpopularity: Two-thirds now oppose the presence of U.S. and Coalition forces in Iraq, 14 points higher than in February 2004. Nearly six in 10 disapprove of how the United States has operated in Iraq since the war, and most of them disapprove strongly. And nearly half of Iraqis would like to see U.S. forces leave soon.

“Specifically, 26 percent of Iraqis say U.S. and other Coalition forces should “leave now” and another 19 percent say they should go after the government chosen in this week’s election takes office; that adds to 45 percent. Roughly the other half says coalition forces should remain until security is restored (31 percent), until Iraqi security forces can operate independently (16 percent), or longer (5 percent).”

Civil war was clearly a popular concern. A total of 37% said that a lack of security, chaos, civil war, internal trouble, or division of the country was the worst thing that could happen to Iraq in the next year. An additional 12% cited terrorism. Some 9% of Iraqis polled said that the worst thing would be for Coalition forces not to leave the country.

A total of 49% of all Iraqis polled still said they felt unsafe, and cited terrorism as the main reason. However, when they were asked what they did to feel more safe, 67% said they avoided US forces, 52% said they avoided checkpoints, 47% said they avoided the police and government buildings, and 43% said they were careful about what they said.

Another ABC report on the situation in Iraq in mid-December noted that,

“The impact of security shortfalls remains significant. Violence has hampered reconstruction, in western and central Iraq in particular, and it has meant that badly needed funds for electricity, clean water, education and salaries for health care professionals are spent instead on security. In one stunning measure of “Where Things Stand” in Iraq we found that as of October 2005, approximately $5 billion of the $18.4 billion appropriated by the U.S. Congress for reconstruction in Iraq had been diverted to security needs.

“Many parents have become more afraid to allow their children, girls in particular, to attend school, and some Iraqis are too frightened even to visit the doctor when sick.

“... a strange calm pervades some cities where local militias have seized power. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Karbala, a major city in southern Iraq where such militia appear to have infiltrated the police and security forces. It’s a development that outsiders, and some locals, view with fear and dismay — how, after all, can the true authorities hold power and garner respect when bands of armed men outside the government set up checkpoints and rule the streets? Yet many locals — in Karbala at least — report that these militias have improved security. An “iron hand” may be at work, and it may be a fleeting calm, but for the moment it is noticed and appreciated.”

Iraqi Attitudes Towards Security by Region, Sect, and Ethnicity

Events since the election have confirmed the fact that there is a serious risk of political division or paralysis in spite of political negotiations. As of late March 2006, even symbolic unity was
still in question. It was also clear that even if the Sunni parties did participate fully in the new
government, the fact remains that they would be divided and have leaders and candidates whose
behavior would be unpredictable.

Security is a major issue. The ABC-Time Oxford Research International poll found that,

“Surprisingly, given the insurgents’ attacks on Iraqi civilians, more than six in 10 Iraqis feel very safe in
their own neighborhoods, up sharply from just 40 percent in a poll in June 2004. And 61 percent say local
security is good — up from 49 percent in the first ABC News poll in Iraq in February 2004.

“Nonetheless, nationally, security is seen as the most pressing problem by far; 57 percent identify it as the
country’s top priority. Economic improvements are helping the public mood. Other views, moreover, are
more negative: Fewer than half, 46 percent, say the country is better off now than it was before the
war…The number of Iraqis who say things are going well in their country overall is just 44 percent, far
closer than the 71 percent who say their own lives are going well. Fifty-two percent instead say the country
is doing badly.”

Even these results understate the fears the insurgents can feed upon. The ABC-Oxford poll did
not break out the results by province or ethnic/sectarian group. The Shi’ites and Kurds living in
the relatively safe provinces have every reason to be far more optimistic about security and life
than other Iraqis. Nation-wide results disguise more than they reveal in describing an insurgency
that is driven by a Sunni minority that cannot be more than 20% of the total population and
which is scarcely united around the insurgents.

This is clear from other polls. Even before the attack on the Mosque of the Golden dome, such
polls found major sectarian differences over how Iraqis felt about their security. According to the
February 2006 Iraq status report by the Pentagon, an overwhelming number of Iraqi’s felt very
safe in the South, Kurdish areas, and mid-Euphrates. These results and those issued in the May
report, which remained relatively unchanged, are summarized in Figure XIV.8 using two
different graphs.

However, the same report found that attitudes towards security were mixed in Baghdad and
Kirkuk. Only about half felt very safe and the other half felt they were not very safe or not very
safe at all. While the poll did not break out the results by sect, it was clear that Sunnis felt
notably less secure than Shi’ites. In the Sunni central cities such as Tikrit and Baquba, only 42%
said they felt very safe, while 41% responded not very safe and 16% not very safe at all. In
Mosul, a full 74% of Iraqi’s said they did not feel safe at all.
Figure XIV.8: Iraqi Perceptions of Safety by Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Very Safe</th>
<th>Not Very Safe</th>
<th>Not Safe At All</th>
<th>Don’t Know/No Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Euphrates</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurdish Areas</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirkuk</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tikrit/Baquba</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosul</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


May 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Don’t Know/No Answer</th>
<th>Not Safe At All</th>
<th>Not Very Safe</th>
<th>Very Safe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Euphrates</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.00%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurdish Areas</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirkuk</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tikrit/Baquba</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosul</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once again, however, serious questions arise as to the lack of any sampling data, description of the poll, etc. Referring to 90% of respondents in Shi‘ite areas and 95% of respondents in Kurdish areas feel “very safe” raises questions about how the percentages can be so high if Basra and Kirkuk are properly polled, crime is considered, militia problems are considered, etc. Given the situation in Baghdad, is it credible that 45% of the population felt very safe in March or 52% in October 2005?2054 This result certainly does not fit the security profiles of Iraqi officials and officers or any other reporting on the area. It also ignores that in Shi‘ite and Kurdish areas the high perceptions of security are not necessarily the result of efforts by the Iraqi government or the presence of police forces. It may be a combination of security provided by both militia forces and police forces that are dominated by one sect or ethnicity.

In these graphs however, it appears that critical areas such as Anbar were ignored. For example, Kirkuk emerges as a deeply insecure area, and Mosul as an extremely high-risk area, in the chart above. These results illustrate in detail why polls that report nationwide results for all Iraqis can be meaningless relative to polls that report by area of Iraq and which poll Iraqis in ways that directly or indirectly reflect their sectarian and ethnic identity.

Many of these same polling problems are evident in Figure XIV.9 which shows the percentage of Iraqis that expressed confidence in various armed factions in Iraq, including militias and the government, to improve the situation in Iraq. Again, there is no mention of Anbar province. When broken down by region, the disparities in Iraqi opinions become clearer.

**Figure XIV.9: Who can Improve the Situation in Iraq?**

| Iraqi Army | 70% | 0.62 | 0.04 | 0.42 | 0.41 | 0.84 | 0.85 |
| Iraqi Police | 0.66 | 0.63 | 0.04 | 0.42 | 0.55 | 0.85 | 0.87 |
| MNF-I | 0.08 | 0.36 | 0.02 | 0.1 | 0.05 | 0.03 | 0.09 |
| Badr Org | 0.23 | 0.3 | 0 | 0.08 | 0.05 | 0.4 | 0.39 |
| Mahdi Army | 0.47 | 0.3 | 0.02 | 0.08 | 0.09 | 0.63 | 0.61 |
| Peshmerga | 0.1 | 0.65 | 0.03 | 0.24 | 0.05 | 0.15 | 0.1 |
| Armed Resistance | 0.18 | 0.27 | 0.7 | 0.44 | 0.5 | 0.07 | 0.09 |


Note: In Mosul, there was no recorded data for the category of “Badr Org.”
According to data in the May report of “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq,” an overwhelming majority of Iraqis regardless of province believed that militias made Iraq more dangerous and should be abolished. This data is shown in Figure XIV.10 below.

**Figure XIV.10: Iraqi Views of Militias**


**Support for Insurgent Actions Outside Iraq**

A Zogby poll showed that the hostility that insurgents feed upon extends far beyond Iraq. When Zogby asked what the most important factor in determining Arab attitudes towards the US were, he got the following results summarized in Figure XIV.11. Zogby found that 84% of Egyptians polled said their attitudes towards the US have grown worse over the last year, 62% of Jordanian, 49% of Lebanese, 72% of Moroccans, 82% of Saudis, and 58% of those in the UAE.

The figure also gives an indication of the causes of Arab anger towards the US. These results have significant similarities to the results of earlier polling done by the Pew Trust, and it is clear that the Iraq War has so far done far more to encourage outside hostility than deter terrorism.
Sunni versus Shi’ite Differences Over Other Aspects of Iraqi Life

The ABC report on “Where Things Stand” found major differences between Sunni and Shi’ite in other areas the insurgency can exploit:

“Virtually all signs of optimism vanish when one is interviewing Iraq’s Sunni Muslims. There’s more on this in the Local Government section of the report; suffice for now to cite a pair of poll results. While 54 percent of Shi’ite Muslims believe the country is in better shape than it was before the war, only 7 percent of Sunnis believe the same. Optimism about security — 80 percent of Shi’ites and 94 percent of Kurds say they feel safer — is absent among Sunnis. Only 11 percent of Iraq’s Sunni Muslims say they feel safer than they did under Saddam.

“Overall, there is a Rorschach-test quality to all this. One could easily sift through the research and field reporting and conclude that Iraq is in danger of collapse; one could almost as easily glean from the same data that there is great cause for optimism.

“At the heart of the ‘collapse’ scenario is a litany of dashed hopes. Many Iraqis cannot understand why — two-and-a-half years after the Americans arrived — electricity and sewage are not more reliable, why more reconstruction projects have not reached their neighborhoods, why corruption remains so prevalent and why their local (and in many cases democratically elected) officials have not changed things for the better.

“Yet there are ample reasons for optimism: The burgeoning commerce that now touches nearly all corners of the country; an economy growing, thanks in part to the high price of oil; per-capita income up 60 percent, to $263 per month; improvements in health care and education; and the widely held belief that next week’s elections will make a positive difference. Seventy-six percent of Iraqis told us they were “confident” the elections would produce a “stable government” — and despite the sectarian divisions, few Iraqis express concern about civil war.”

Ironically, this latter statement illustrates the dilemmas and contradictions in reporting on Iraq and Iraqi attitudes. The rise is per capita income is a national average based on dividing the total population into the total GNP measured in ppp terms. It is driven as much by a flood of wartime income and aid as oil revenue, and the distribution is unquestionably far less equitable than at the time of Saddam Hussein.

As ABC reported in its mid December poll,

“Unemployment overall is difficult to gauge. There is a growing ‘informal economy,’ and many Iraqis have taken second jobs. A U.N. survey published in May 2005 put unemployment at 18.4 percent; this is...
almost certainly a low-end figure…nationwide unemployment currently hovers between 27 percent and 40 percent.

“...The work rolls remain decimated because of the purging of the old army and much of the old Ba’athist apparatus. Whatever the political benefits or costs of that much-debated policy, there is no question that it put a great many Iraqi men out of work. Further, the Iraqi government no longer finds it practical or feasible to employ the sprawling work force that existed during the rule of Saddam Hussein.”

ABC found negligible support or gratitude for the US aid effort: Only 18% percent of the Iraqis polled described the post-war construction efforts in their area as “very effective.” At total of 52% said they were ineffective or had never occurred at all. Only 6% saw the US as playing a main role in the reconstruction process and only 12% gave credit to the government.

As Figure XIV.12 shows, this result was scarcely unique. Other polls produced similar results, and show just how little credibility most aspects of the US aid effort had with Iraqis.
Figure XIV.12: Iraqi Attitudes Towards the US Aid Effort in Iraq
(Support Shown in Percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Kurd</th>
<th>Shi’ite Arab</th>
<th>Sunni Arab</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training Iraqi Security Forces</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve and US doing good job</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve but US is doing poor job</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disapprove</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assisting with the Economic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development Of Iraq</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve and US doing good job</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve but US is doing poor job</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disapprove</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assisting with the Development</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Iraq’s Oil Industry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve and US doing good job</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve but US is doing poor job</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disapprove</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Help Build Government Institutions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve and US doing good job</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve but US is doing poor job</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disapprove</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Develop Infrastructure (Roads, Electricity, etc.)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve and US doing good job</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve but US is doing poor job</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disapprove</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meet Community and Local Needs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve and US doing good job</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve but US is doing poor job</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disapprove</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The results for refuse to answer or don’t know have been deleted. The percentages are too small to be relevant.


In the May report to Congress on the status of Iraq’s stability and security, data indicated that in all provinces Iraqis believed that the economic situation had worsened between March of 2005 to March 2006. Those who thought the economic situation was better than before the war was cut in half in Baghdad, from about 60% to 30%. Even in the Shi’ite south, by May 2006 only 70% of respondents believed that Iraqi was better off economically after the war than before. In Sunni areas, the numbers were much lower. This data is shown below in Figure XIV.13.
This same report is flawed in several respects and casts doubt over the validity of the graphs and data. The report dodges around critical problems with unemployment by quoting vague national figures of 18%, and stating that other estimates range between 25% and 40%2055 (the CIA says 20-30% and EIA says 27-40%). Saying that unemployment and poverty “remain concerns” but that there are “substantial difficulties in measuring them accurately,” gloss over one of the most destabilizing aspects of modern Iraq. It ignores the impact on young men and in high crime and insurgency areas. It ignores the failure of the aid program to create real jobs, with peak employment around 120,000 in a country with a workforce the CIA estimates at 7.4 million. Unemployment is not a casual macroeconomic factoid. It is a central key to bring stability, security, and defeating the insurgency.

All of these issues raise serious questions about the data above. Once again, there is no explanation of validation of the poll. It is extremely difficult to see, however, the results for the percent of Iraqis who felt the economy was better than before the war could possibly by right if the GDP data were right or the unemployment data were right. If the poll results are right, however, the text should mention the massive decline in economic confidence between March 2005 and March 2006 in Baghdad, the Kurdish areas, Kirkuk, and Tikrit/Baquba.
Economic conditions in Iraq were closely linked to the failure of U.S. and Iraqi forces to provide security in the summer of 2006. The Iraqi Minister of Planning released the results from a survey completed from June 23, 2006 through July 23, 2006. The results of the survey showed that one average, Iraqis spent 40% of their income on fuel, transportation and electricity. The minister pointed out that from 1988 to 1992, Iraqis paid only 5% of their income for those items. Furthermore, 99% of families go to the black market for propane; 98% of families use the black market for kerosene; 84% of families go to the black market for diesel; and 62% use the black market for gasoline. Iraq’s economy when the survey was conducted was at its weakest point since the invasion. Some sources showed unemployment as high as 60%, although the CIA reported it at 30% in 2005. Since 2003, the prices of food and basic goods at least doubled. Economic hardship began to take a toll on Iraqis, who worried about providing sufficient food for their families. Furthermore, many Iraqis turned down jobs in particularly volatile areas because they feared for their safety. Ongoing sectarian strife continued to drive up prices, making life for the average Iraqi close to unbearable. Economic despair, fear of the security crisis and impatience drove many Iraqis to join sectarian militias, which only propagated the economic decline.

**Iraqi Public Perception in the Summer of 2006**

The International Republican Institute (IRI) conducted a countrywide survey between June 14 and June 24, 2006, polling around 3,000 Iraqis on political, economic and security issues, and living conditions. IRI Executive Vice President Judy Van Rest said that while “the polls show the security and economic conditions remain dire…there is a lot of hope among ordinary Iraqis about the future.” Through everything that’s gone on,” she said, “there’s a strong feeling that that the country should stay together.”

Several public opinion polls were also included in the August 2006 Pentagon Report to Congress, “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq.” The surveys were predominantly carried out by the State Department Office of Research over June and July.

Both sets of data—those compiled by the IRI and the State Department—were prone to a series of inaccuracies inherit in public opinion polling, but were likely to be more questionable because of inhospitable security conditions in Iraq, particularly in areas like Mosul, Anbar, and Baghdad. Moreover, polls often lack adequate explanation of methodology—such as whether control questions were used—making it difficult to ascertain the validity of the sample, and establish the true margin of error, a problem that was especially apparent in the Quarterly Report figures.

These two sets of polling data were gathered prior to the July peak in violence, and after Prime Nuri al-Maliki announced the new security crackdown for Iraq—factors that likely skewed the data toward a relatively more optimistic outlook. The surveys were also conducted shortly after the full creation of the Iraqi national unity government, and consequently reflected a time when Shi’ites and Kurds largely considered themselves “winners” of the political process.

As indicated in Figure XIV.14, most Iraqis felt that the country was “heading in the right direction,” by a 41 percent to 35 percent margin—reflecting a reversal from an earlier poll conducted in late March, in which 52 percent of those polled indicated that the country was going in the wrong direction, compared to 30 percent who said it was heading in the right direction. The regional breakdown for the more recent polling data, depicted in Figure XIV.15, showed a strong divergence in opinion in the Northern Arab and Sunni Arab areas, where the
majority indicated that the country was headed in the wrong direction. The following breakdown of reasons were cited when respondents were asked why the country was heading in the right or wrong direction:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Right Direction</th>
<th>Wrong Direction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elected national government</td>
<td>Bad security situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom and democracy</td>
<td>Presence of occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting rid of former regime</td>
<td>Sectarian conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elections</td>
<td>Inactive government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a constitution</td>
<td>General instability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to IRI polling, twenty-five percent of Iraqis expressed that they were very confident in the new Iraqi government, 33 percent were somewhat confident, compared to 7 percent who were somewhat unconfident, and 29 percent who were not confident. But the regional breakdown, illustrated in Figure XIV.16, showed that the overwhelming majority (78 percent) of respondents in the northern Arab areas deeply lacked confidence in the government, and 52 percent of the respondents in Sunni areas were either very or somewhat unconfident in the government. When respondents were asked which issues should be given highest priority by the new Iraqi government, security, infrastructure, and economic development/job creation ranked as the top three areas.

The August 2006 Pentagon Report to Congress on Iraq included a similar poll, assessing public confidence in the government to improve the situation in Iraq, depicted below as Figure XIV.17. The State Department Office of Research conducted its survey shortly after the IRI polling period. While the data indicated that the majority of Iraqis had faith in the new government, confidence levels were notably lowest in mixed and predominantly Sunni areas, such as Kirkuk and Tikrit/Baquba.

IRI polling found that 59 percent of respondents said that the overall economic conditions in Iraq were poor, 26 percent said that they were fair, and 11 percent indicated that they were good or excellent (See Figure XIV.18). When Iraqis were asked about their personal economic conditions, the distribution was fairly similar. Forty-nine percent said that the conditions were poor, 34 percent indicated that conditions were fair, 15 percent that they were good, and 1 percent that they were excellent.

As depicted in Figure XIV.19, the regional breakdown of personal economic conditions showed noticeable variation across different areas in Iraq. Fifty four percent of respondents described “good” personal economic conditions in Kurdish areas, whereas 82 percent and 67 described their situation as “poor” in Northern Arab and Sunni areas, respectively.

A poll conducted by the State Department Office of Research in June 2005, and repeated in July 2006, compared Iraqi responses to whether they felt that their household financial situation had improved from pre-war conditions. The results, recreated below as Figure XIV.20, showed variation across regions, but Iraqi assessments were broadly more pessimistic in July 2006 than the previous reporting period.

Seventy-five percent of Iraqis described their overall security conditions as “poor,” according to the IRI polling data illustrated in Figure XIV.21. However, when respondent were asked to
describe security conditions in their respective neighborhoods, the distribution depicted a somewhat more optimistic assessment. Thirty-eight percent described the security conditions in their neighborhood as “poor,” 20 percent as fair, 22 percent as good, and 18 percent as excellent (See Figure XIV.22). The regional breakdown, of security conditions in different neighborhoods, illustrated as Figure XIV.23, indicated that Iraqis in Kurdish areas felt the safest, with 77 percent describing personal security conditions as excellent. Responses from Northern Arab, Sunni areas, and Baghdad indicated much less secure environments in these neighborhoods.

The August 2006 Pentagon Report to Congress on Iraq included a poll assessing the level of Iraqi concern of sectarian and ethnic violence. The graph, depicted below as Figure XIV.24, showed markedly high levels of concern in Baghdad, Kirkuk, and Tikrit/Baquba, and generally high levels of anxiousness throughout the country.

Another graph included in the Pentagon report measured Iraqi confidence in various security forces—namely the Iraqi Army, the Iraqi police, the Badr Organization, the Mahdi Army and the Peshmerga—to improve the situation in the country. (See Figure XIV.25). The text of the DoD report noted that confidence in the Iraqi Army remained relatively constant since the previous reporting period, with the exception of Baghdad, where public confidence in the Iraqi military rose from 69 to 78 percent. But the report later noted that this change was coupled with increased confidence in militias. Confidence in the Badr Organization in Baghdad increased from roughly 23 to 42 percent since the last reporting period. Respondents in Kurdish areas reported increased faith in the Iraqi military, but they also voiced higher levels of confidence in the Peshmerga. Analysis in the DoD Report largely glossed over this set of data, at a time when militias were threatening to fill a widening security and political void.
Figure XIV.14: Overall Direction of the Country: May 2004-June 2006

Do you feel that Iraq is generally heading in the right direction or the wrong direction?

*Does not include Mosul, Anbar and Dohuk/ **Does not include Mosul and Dohul/ ***Does not include Anbar

Figure XIV.15: Overall Direction of the Country – Regional Breakdown: June 2006

Do you feel that Iraq is generally heading in the right direction or the wrong direction?

Figure XIV.16: Confidence in the Government – Regional Breakdown, IRI Reporting: June 2006

What level of overall confidence do you have in the government announced by Nouri Al-Maliki?

![Confidence in the Government Chart]

**Figure XIV.17: Confidence in the Government – Regional Breakdown, State Dept. Reporting: June 2006**

How much confidence do you have in the new Iraqi government to improve the situation in Iraq?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Great deal/fair amount</th>
<th>Not much/not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurdish Areas</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirkuk</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tikrit/Baquba</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Euphrates</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Data points are estimates from figure included in the DoD report.

Department of State, Office of Research, June 21-July 6, 2006

Sample sizes: Baghdad-173; Kurdish Areas-308; Kirkuk-108; Tikrit/Baquba-210; Mid-Euphrates-523; South-437

Margin of error: ±4% for the overall sample, but varies among regions.

Note: Data from Mosul is not included in this chart. It was determined to be unreliable.
Figure XIV.18: Overall Economic Conditions in Iraq: June 2006

How would you rate economic conditions in Iraq today?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>DK/NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure XIV.19: Personal Economic Conditions – Regional Breakdown: June 2006

How would you describe your personal economic condition today?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baghdad</th>
<th>Kurdish Area</th>
<th>Northern Arab</th>
<th>Sunni Areas</th>
<th>Mid-Euphrates</th>
<th>South</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DK</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure XIV.20: Household Financial Situation: June/July 2006

Percent of respondents who expressed that their household’s financial situation had improved compared to before the war

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2005 June</th>
<th>2006 July</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurdish Areas</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosul</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirkuk</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tikrit/Baquita</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Euphrates</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Data points are estimates from figure included in the DoD report.

Department of State, Office of Research, June 2005/July 2006
Sample sizes: June 2005: Baghdad-216; Kurdish Areas-344; Mosul 127; Kirkuk-115; Tikrit/Baquita-224; Mid-Euphrates-527; South-435
July 2006: Baghdad-173; Kurdish Areas-308; Mosul-111; Kirkuk-108; Tikrit/Baquita-210; Mid-Euphrates-523; South-437
Margin of error: ±4% for the overall sample, but varies among regions.
Figure XIV.21: Overall Security Conditions in Iraq: June 2006

How would you describe the security conditions in Iraq today?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>DK/NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure XIV.22: Security Conditions in Neighborhood: June 2006

How would you describe the current security conditions in your neighborhood?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>DK/NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure XIV.23: Security Conditions in Neighborhood – Regional Breakdown: June 2006

How would you describe the current security conditions in your neighborhood?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baghdad</th>
<th>Kurdish Area</th>
<th>Northern Arab</th>
<th>Sunni Areas</th>
<th>Mid-Euphrates</th>
<th>South</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DK/NA</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure XIV.24: Concern of Sectarian and Ethnic Violence: June/July 2006

How concerned are you about an increase in sectarian or ethnic violence in Iraq?


Data points are estimates from figure included in the DoD report.

Department of State, Office of Research, June 21-July 6, 2006.
Sample sizes: Baghdad-173; Kurdish Areas-308; Kirkuk-108; Tikrit/Baquba-210; Mid-Euphrates-523; South-437
Margin of Error: ±4% for the overall sample, but varies among regions.
Figure XIV.25: Confidence in Different Security Forces: June/July 2006

Percent expressing confidence in _____ to improve the situation in Iraq.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baghdad</th>
<th>Kurdish Areas</th>
<th>Kirkuk</th>
<th>Tikrit/Baquaba</th>
<th>Mid-Euphrates</th>
<th>South</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi Army</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi Police</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badr Organization</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahdi Army</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peshmerga</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Data points are estimates from the DoD report.

Department of State, Office of Research, June 21-July 6, 2006

Sample sizes: Baghdad-173; Kurdish Areas-308; Kirkuk-108; Tikrit/Baquaba-210; Mid-Euphrates-523; South-437

Margin of error: ±4% for the overall sample, but varies among regions.

Note: Data from Mosul is not included in this chart. It was determined to be unreliable.

Iraqi perceptions in the mid-late of 2006

In early September, WorldPublicOpinion.org conducted a survey of Iraqi public opinion on political and security issues. Overall Iraqi confidence in the security situation fell since World Public Opinion’s original survey in January. Confidence in the Iraqi government also fell with a majority of Iraqis thinking that the country was headed in the wrong direction. Sunnis in particular had grown more pessimistic since January.

Views on the US Presence

Support for US forces in Iraq diminished in the time between the two polls and the majority of Iraqis felt that the US was provoking more conflict than it was preventing. Most significantly, more Iraqis felt that the US should withdraw completely within six months. The Shi’a in particular felt a greater urgency; the percentile calling for withdrawal increased from 22% to 26% in six months. On the contrary, Sunnis moderated their calls for withdrawal; in January
83% wished US forces to leave within six months, and in September the percentile dropped to 57%. This decrease may have reflected Sunni concerns about the growth of Shi‘ite militias. \textsuperscript{2062}

One concerned Sunni resident in the central Baghdad neighborhood of Tobji expressed his concerns; “When the Americans are in my neighborhood I can put my head in my pillow and sleep. If they stay, there will be security. If they leave there will not only be civil war. There will be a house-to-house war.”\textsuperscript{2063}

However, the overwhelming majority of Iraqis thought that the US military provoked more conflict than it prevented in September. Overall, only 21% thought that the US military was a stabilizing force and 78% thought it provoked conflict. 82% of Shi’a, 97% of Sunnis, and 41% of Kurds shared this latter critical view. The Kurds remained the most confident in US troops of the three sects. Similarly, the majority of Iraqis - 58% - felt that if US troops withdrew by early 2007, it would decrease the amount of inter-ethnic violence, and 61% believed that day-to-day security would increase when the US pulled out.

In addition, a majority - 61% - of Iraqis approved attacks on US-led forces in Iraq, up from 47% in January. Most significantly, 62% of Shi’a approved of attacks, opposed to only 41% earlier in the year. Kurds continued to express the greatest disapproval of attacks while Sunni approval increased marginally from 88% to 92%. Finally, the vast majority - 78% - believed that even if the Iraqi government were to tell the US to withdraw all forces, the US would fail to do so.\textsuperscript{2064}

An unclassified survey by the state department found similar views on the US presence. However, the polling sample was small and did not include residents from Anbar Province. The poll found that nine in ten Iraqi Arab youths saw the US and as occupying force, but 70% of Kurdish youths saw the coalition forces as liberating.\textsuperscript{2065}

A poll conducted by the Iraq Center for Research and Strategic Studies in late November found that 95% of Iraqis felt that the security situation was better in 2003 than it was in late 2006. About half of those polled favored an immediate withdrawal of US troops, 11% wanted US troops to withdraw when the Iraqi government made the request, 14% believed US-led troops should withdraw when violence ceased, and 20% favored a phased withdrawal beginning at the time of the polling. A total of 66% believed that the security situation would improve if coalition forces left Iraq.\textsuperscript{2066}

These polling results presented a bleak picture to the US after a summer of the highest Iraqi casualties since the invasion in 2003. Iraqis clearly had less and less confidence in the ability of US-led forces and in US intentions.
**Views on Security/ Iraqi Forces**

Iraqi views on their security forces reflected sectarian divisions and confirmed fears that MOI forces had been infiltrated by Shi’ite militias. Although most Iraqis wanted the US to withdraw promptly, they still lacked confidence in their own security forces, but it was greater than in January. 53% of all Iraqis felt that ISF forces were strong enough to address security challenges on their own, compared with only 39% in January. Similarly, 46% thought that Iraq would still need to support of military forces from other countries, which was down from 59% six months earlier. The augmented confidence stemmed primarily from a jump from 45% to 68% Shi’a believing in Iraqi security forces. Kurds also felt more confident in the ISF; 40% trusted in them as opposed to only 22% in January, although 57% of Kurds still felt that military aid from other countries was necessary.

On the other hand, Sunni confidence in the ability of ISF dropped from 38% to 24%. These fluctuations likely reflected the infiltration of security forces by Shi’ite militias following the bombing of the Samarra mosque in February. The Iraqi army elicited the greatest confidence from all three groups, with 64% of all Iraqis saying they had “a lot/some” confidence in the army. The police received a 71% vote of confidence, but it was overwhelmingly Shi’a.

Most Iraqis disapproved of attacks on the security forces and civilians. 96% “somewhat disapproved/strongly disapproved” of attacks on ISF, up 3% from January. A full 100% of those polled disapproved of attacks on civilians.2067

A state department poll also found that Sunni youth support of ISF was minimal. The majority of Sunni youths opposed enlisting in army and police forces. In Shi’a areas, the poll found that most youths expressed support for local militias, rather than the ISF as a whole.2068

The November Department of Defense Quarterly Report to Congress stated that from information in Department of State poll, about 60% of Iraqis reported worsening security conditions. At a local level, particularly in the south, some Iraqis felt safer, but this was most likely a result of sectarian displacement. Iraqis living in the Tikrit/Baquba area felt the least safe, which corresponds with an increase in sectarian violence in those areas in the fall of 2006. The Report also said that 25% of the Iraqi population believed that the Iraqi army and police were “corrupt and driven by sectarian interests.”
Figure XIV.27: Iraqi Attitudes Towards the Security Situation in Iraq in September 2006

(Support shown in percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attacks on US-led Forces in Iraq</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Kurd</th>
<th>Shi’ite Arab</th>
<th>Sunni Arab</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approve</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attacks on Iraqi Government Forces</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Approve</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve Somewhat</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disapprove Somewhat</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disapprove</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attacks on Iraqi Civilians</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Approve</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve Somewhat</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disapprove Somewhat</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disapprove</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Should the New Iraqi Government Ask the US to Do About US-led Forces?</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Withdraw all in 6 months</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdraw all in 1 year</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdraw all in 2 years</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wait till situation improves</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you think the US Military in Iraq is:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A stabilizing force</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provoking more conflict than preventing</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of US Withdrawal on Violence And Security on:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amount of inter-ethnic violence</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day to day security</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How Capable are Iraqi Security Forces?</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong enough now</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still need foreign help</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How much confidence do you have in the forces that protect your security?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Force</th>
<th>Some/a lot</th>
<th>None/a little</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi Army</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior Ministry</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Would you prefer a strong government that would get rid of all militias or do you think it would be better to continue to have militias to protect your security?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Strong government</th>
<th>Continue to have militias</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong government</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to have militias</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure XIV.28: How Safe do you Feel in your Neighborhood?

Views on the Iraqi Government

According to the WorldPublicOpinion.org poll, 77% of Iraqis favored a strong government that would get rid of militias. Sunnis overwhelmingly voted against militias, with 100% desiring a strong central government that would not tolerate militias. Shi’s voted 33% in favor of militias while Kurds voted 15% in favor. Similarly, 36% Shi’a believed that in mid 2006 the central government had too much power. 46% of Sunnis felt that the government was too strong as well. These seemingly contradictory numbers for Sunnis may have been a result of dissatisfaction with the Shi’ite dominated government; they most likely wanted a central authority with more Sunni representation that would end Shi’ite militias. Despite coinciding talks of federalism, most Iraqis (72%) believed that in five years the nation would still be a single state. Sunnis were the most doubtful with only 56% saying that unity was “very/somewhat likely.”

Iraqis were also questioned about their views of various Shi’ite leaders in Iraq, including the Prime Minister. Despite reports that Sistani’s power was waning in late 2006, the top Shi’ite cleric still garnered more support than the Prime Minister. Al-Sadr, however, also received 50% of the Shi’ite vote. Kurds and Sunnis substantially rejected Sadr’s leadership.

The overall view of progress in Iraq fell significantly since the previous World Public Opinion poll in January 2006. When asked if they thought Iraq was going in the right direction, 59% of Shi’a, 64% of Kurds, and 6% of Sunnis, compared with 84%, 76%, and 6% respectfully, in January, thought their country was on the right track. For the first time, an overall 52% thought Iraq was headed in the wrong direction. The number of Iraqis who still believed that ousting Saddam Hussein was worth it fell from 77% in January to 61% in September. Moreover, the general mood for the future was pessimistic; 31% expected the violence to be the same in six months and 30% expected it to be higher.

A Sunni resident in Baghdad interviewed by the New York Times said they he would like to see a strongman - possibly former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi - lead a military coup to take over the government. He said that democracy was not working to control Iraqis and that only a strongman could prevent full-scale civil war. Another Sunni disagree however, saying that the militias would turn and take on the coup forces. An English educated Sunni said that trying to prevent the escalation of violence was futile because, he said, Iraqis were destined to fight after years of abuse.

A Shi’ite sheik shared the perspective that democracy was not working. He said that the only solution would be to ban political parties and declare martial law. He also favored imminent American withdrawal. A Shi’ite student in Sadr city agreed; he said that it was already civil war so the US led forces might as well leave and Iraqi could declare civil war, but at least “one confesses what he is really doing.”

According the MNF-Iraq spokesman General Caldwell – in a poll conducted in October – 89% of Iraqis said that their first loyalty was to the their country, rather than a sect, ethnic group, or tribe. A smaller 70% said that they supported the current government in Iraq and 25% said they thought the country would be better off if it were partitioned along sectarian lines. Caldwell did warn against relying heavily on poll results, but he said, “They do indicate that the violence is not representative of the desires of the Iraqi people.” The reality on the ground however,
indicated that Iraqis were defining “loyalty to country” and an abstract concept of nationalism differently than the traditional American definition.

**Figure XIV.29: Confidence in the ability of the Iraqi Government to protect from threats**

Percent people answer “a great deal” or “some” confidence


Data points are estimates from the DoD report.
Figure XIV.30: Confidence in the Government

Percent answering “very” or “somewhat” confident that the Government of Iraq could improve the situation in Iraq

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Iraqi Province</th>
<th>July 2006</th>
<th>October 2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ninawa</td>
<td>50%-75%</td>
<td>0%-15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahuk</td>
<td>75%-100%</td>
<td>75%-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arbil</td>
<td>75%-100%</td>
<td>75%-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulaymaniya</td>
<td>75%-100%</td>
<td>75%-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamim</td>
<td>25%-50%</td>
<td>25%-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salah ad Din</td>
<td>0%-25%</td>
<td>0%-25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diyala</td>
<td>0%-15%</td>
<td>0%-25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>75%-100%</td>
<td>50%-75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karbala</td>
<td>75%-100%</td>
<td>50%-75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babil</td>
<td>75%-100%</td>
<td>50%-75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasit</td>
<td>75%-100%</td>
<td>50%-75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Najaf</td>
<td>75%-100%</td>
<td>50%-75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qadisiya</td>
<td>75%-100%</td>
<td>50%-75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muthanna</td>
<td>75%-100%</td>
<td>50%-75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhi Qar</td>
<td>75%-100%</td>
<td>50%-75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maysan</td>
<td>75%-100%</td>
<td>50%-75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basra</td>
<td>75%-100%</td>
<td>50%-75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure XIV.28: Strength of Central Government

Do you think that the new Iraqi system of government grants the central government too much power, too little power, or the right about amount of power?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Too Much</th>
<th>About Right</th>
<th>Too Little</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shi'a</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunni</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurd</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure XIV.29: Iraqi Views on Various Shi’ite Leaders

Figure XIV.30: Iraqi Political Divisions by Iraqi Ethnic Group and Arab Religious Sect

Iraqi Political Attitudes in fall - 2006

(support shown in percents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Kurds</th>
<th>Shi’a</th>
<th>Sunni</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is Iraq going in the right direction?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right direction</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong direction</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How likely do you think it is that 5 years from now Iraq will still be a single state?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Likely</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think that ousting Saddam Hussein was worth it?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worth it</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Figure XIV.31: Iraqi Opinions of the Future – early 2006 vs. mid 2006

Do you think that Iraq is generally headed in the right or wrong direction?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Shia</th>
<th>Sunni</th>
<th>Kurd</th>
<th>Shia</th>
<th>Sunni</th>
<th>Kurd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Right Direction</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong Direction</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

XVII. Probable Outcomes and Lessons of War

The positive side of events is that Shi’ite, Kurdish, and some key Sunni leaders still actively work for a united Iraq. More and more Iraqi forces are coming on-line, playing an active role, and taking over their own battle space. The insurgency so far lacks major foreign support, although it does get limited amounts of money, weapons, and foreign fighters. It does not have the support of most Shi’ites and Kurds, who make up some 70-80% of the population.

*If* Iraqi forces become effective in large numbers, *if* the Iraqi government demonstrates that its success means the phase out of Coalition forces, and *if* the Iraqi government remains inclusive in dealing with Sunnis willing to come over to its side, the insurgency should be defeated over time -- although some cadres could then operate as diehards at the terrorist level for a decade or more.

The negative side is that there is a serious risk of full-scale civil war. The efforts of the insurgents to divide Iraq along sectarian and ethnic lines are having some success and are leading to Shi’ite and Kurdish reprisals that are causing fear and anger among Sunnis. Shi’ite and Kurdish federalism, mixed with the rise of Shi’ite religious factions and militias, can divide the country. The Iraqi political process is unstable and uncertain, and parties and officials are now identified (and identifying themselves) largely by sect and ethnicity. Severe ethnic and sectarian divisions exist inside the government at the national, regional, and local levels. Popular support for the Coalition presence in Iraq is now a distinct minority in every Coalition country.

In short, the odds of insurgent success at best are even. Iraq could degenerate into full-scale civil conflict or remain divided and/or unstable for some years to come. There already is limited popular support in the US and Britain for a continued military role and major new aid programs, and continued political turmoil or serious civil war could make a continued Coalition presence untenable and drive US and British forces out of Iraq. It seems likely that the US will have to slow its plans to reduce its military presence, adjust to new threats, and intensify its efforts to shape effective security and police forces if it is to deal with the growing risk of civil conflict during the period in which the new government must come to grips with all of the issues raised by the constitution -- a period which now seems likely to last until at least September of 2006.

Much depends on the success of the Iraqi political process following the December 15th election, how Iraqis deal with the range of issues raised by the Constitutional referendum and need for action on its outcome once a new government takes office. Much also depends on how well Iraqi forces succeed in becoming effective at both the military and political level, and in replacing Coalition forces. Finally, much depends on the ability of the new Iraqi government to take responsibility for what happens in Iraq, lead effectively, and establish effective police and government services in the field -- all areas where previous Iraqi governments have been weak.

There is also a continuing possibility that the insurgency will drive Iraq’s political and religious leaders and various elements of the Iraqi forces into warring Sunni, Shi’ite, and Kurdish factions. Even the most committed leaders may be forced to abandon the search for a national and inclusive political structure if sectarian and ethnic fighting escalates out of control. Those that do not, may be replaced by far more extreme voices.

The new Iraqi forces can divide along ethnic and sectarian lines and much of the police and security forces already are divided in this way. There is also a risk that Iraq could bring in
outside powers supporting given factions. Iran supporting Iraqi Shi’ites, the Arab Sunni states supporting Iraq Sunnis, with the Kurds left largely isolated and facing increasing problems with the Turks. Any precipitous Coalition withdrawal would greatly encourage this possibility.

The Lessons of Complexity, Uncertainty, and Risk

Whatever happens, the US and its allies need to consider the lessons of the "war after the war" in Iraq. One key lesson is the need for ruthless objectivity and to accept the political and military complexity of counterinsurgency. Far too often, policymakers, analysts, and intelligence experts approach the subject of counterinsurgency by trying to oversimplify the situation, underestimate the risks, and exaggerate the level of control they can achieve over the course and ultimate strategic outcome of the war.

They try to deny both complexity of most counterinsurgency campaigns, and the full range of issues that must be dealt with. In doing so, many try to borrow from past wars or historical examples, and they talk about “lessons,” as if a few simple lessons from one conflict could be transferred easily to another. The end result is that -- far too often -- they end up rediscovering the same old failed slogans and over simplifications and trot out all the same old case histories without really examining how valid they are.

There is a great deal to be learned from past wars if the lessons are carefully chosen and adapted as potential insights into a new conflict rather than transferable paradigms. The Iraq War, however, is not the Afghan War, much less Mao, Malaysia, Vietnam, Northern Ireland, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There is nothing to be gained from efforts to revive the same old tactical and technical solutions, without remembering past failures. “Oil spots,” “hearts and minds,” “Special Forces,” walls and barriers, and sensor nets are just a few examples of such efforts that have been applied to the Iraq War.

The Need For Accurate Planning and Risk Assessment

Much has been made of the intelligence failures in assessing Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. These failures pale to insignificance, however, in comparison with the failure of US policy and military planners to accurately assess the overall situation in Iraq before engaging in war, and for the risk of insurgency if the US did not carry out an effective mix of nation building and stability operations. This failure cannot be made the responsibility of the intelligence community. It was the responsibility of the President, the Vice President, the National Security Advisor, the Secretary of State, the Sector of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

All had the responsibility to bring together policymakers, military planners, intelligence experts, and area experts to provide as accurate a picture of Iraq and the consequences of an invasion as possible. Each failed to exercise that responsibility. The nation’s leading policymakers chose to act on a limited and highly ideological view of Iraq that planned for one extremely optimistic definition of success, but not for risk or failure.

There was no real planning for stability operations. Key policymakers did not want to engage in nation building and chose to believe that removing Saddam Hussein from power would leave the Iraqi government functioning and intact. Plans were made on the basis that significant elements of the Iraqi armed forces would turn to the Coalition’s side, remain passive, or put up only token resistance.
No real effort was made to ensure continuity of government or stability and security in Iraq's major cities and throughout the countryside. Decades of serious sectarian and ethnic tension were downplayed or ignored. Actions by Saddam Hussein’s regime that had crippled Iraq’s economic development since the early years of the Iran-Iraq War – at time when Iraq had only 17-18 million people were ignored. Iraq was assumed to be an oil wealthy country whose economy could quickly recover if the oil fields were not burned, and transform itself into a modern capitalist structure in the process.

The nation’s most senior military commanders compounded these problems by planning for the conventional defeat of the enemy and an early exit from Iraq, by making a deliberate effort to avoid “Phase IV” and stability operations. The fact they did so to minimize the strain on the US force posture, and the “waste” of US troops on “low priority” missions played a major role in creating the conditions under which insurgency could develop and flourish.

The intelligence community and civilian and military area experts may not have predicted the exact nature of the insurgency that followed. Analysis is not prophecy. They did, however, provide ample warning that this was a risk that Iraqi exiles were often failing to provide a balanced or accurate picture, and nation building would be both necessary and extremely difficult. The nation’s top policymakers choose to both ignore and discourage such warnings as “negative” and “exaggerated,” and to plan for success. They did so having seen the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the sectarian and ethnic problems of Afghanistan.

To succeed, the US must plan for failure as well as success. It must see the development or escalation of insurgency as a serious risk in any contingency were it is possible, and take preventive and ongoing steps to prevent or limit it. This is an essential aspect of war planning and no Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, service chief, or unified and specified commander can be excused for failing to plan and act in this area. Responsibility begins directly at the top, and failures at any other level pale to insignificance by comparison.

This is even truer because top-level policymakers failed to recognize or admit the scale of the problem as it developed. Their failures were as much failures of reaction as prediction or contingency planning, and failures to accurately assess and react to ongoing events are far less excusable. There were no mysteries involving the scale of the collapse of the Iraqi government and security forces within days of the fall of Saddam Hussein. The reaction was slow, inadequate, and shaped by denial of the seriousness of the problem.

This situation did not improve until more than a year after the fall Saddam’s regimes, and at least six months after it became apparent that a serious insurgency was developing. Major resources did not flow into the creation of effective Iraqi forces until the fall of 2004. The US aid effort behaved for nearly a year and a half as if insurgency was truly a small group of diehards or “terrorists.” Even in late 2005, top US civilian policymakers split hairs over semantics to try to even avoid the word insurgency, failed to perceive that many Sunni Arab Iraqis see such an insurgency has legitimate causes, and choose to largely publicly ignore the risks of civil conflict and the developing problems in Shi’ite forces and political structures.

The US denied risks and realities of the Vietnam War. European powers initially denied the realities that forced them to end their colonial role. Israel denied the risks and realities of striking deep into Lebanon and seeking to create a Christian-dominated allied state. Russia denied the
risks and realities of Chechnya in spite of all the brutal lessons of having denied the risk and realities of Afghanistan.

The failure to learn the need for accurate characterization of the nation and region where counterinsurgency may -- or does -- exist seems to be a constant lesson of why nations go to and stay at war. The failure to plan for risk and failure as well as success is equally significant. Ruthless objectivity is the cheapest solution to be preventing and limiting insurgency, and planning and deploying for the full range of stability operations and nation building is an essential precaution wherever the stakes are high and the risk is significant.

**The Limits of "Oil Spots"**

The "oil spot" theory, for example, is useful if it simply means securing key populated areas and allowing local governance to become effective and people to feel secure enough to see the insurgents as defeatable. Winning hearts and minds does not mean persuading people to accept constant daily threats and violence. The creation of safe areas is critical. Success in Iraq, and many other campaigns, will depend heavily on finding the right trade-offs between creating safe areas and aggressively pursuing the enemy to prevent the insurgents from creating safe areas of their own and attacking the safe area of the Iraqi government and Coalition.

At a different level, however, “oil spots” are simply one more slogan in a long list of such approaches to counterinsurgency. Iraq is not atypical of many insurgencies in the fact that the key areas where insurgencies are active are also centers of ethnic and sectarian tension, and that the insurgency within these areas is also a low-level civil war.

In cities like Baghdad and Mosul, the most important potential “oil spots,” it simply is not practical to try to separate the constant risk of more intense civil conflict from defeating the insurgency. Sectarian and ethnic conflict has intensified in spite of local security efforts, and a concept that ultimately failed in Vietnam is in many ways simply not applicable to Iraq.

Neither option can really be chosen over the other. Worse, in a highly urbanized country -- where many major urban areas and their surroundings have mixed populations and the insurgency can exploit serious ethic and sectarian tensions -- creating coherent safe areas in major cities can be difficult to impossible. Rapid action tends to force the US to choose one sect or ethnic group over others. It also presents major tactical problems in the many mixed areas including Iraq's major cities. It is far from clear whether it is even possible to guard any area against well-planned covert IED and suicide bombing attacks, or make it feel secure unless enough political compromise has already taken place to do a far better job of depriving insurgent of popular support.

Creating secure "oil spots" in sectarian and ethnic based insurgencies like the Iraqi War also requires effective local governance and security forces. US and allied Coalition forces cannot create secure areas because they are seen as occupiers and lack the area expertise, language skills, HUMINT, and stable personal contacts to know if the insurgents are present or the area is really secure. Iraq is a good example of a case where an ally may be able to eventually make areas secure, but where the political dimension is critical, and Coalition forces cannot solve either the security or political problem without a local ally's aid.
The Limits of Technology and Western "Swarm" Techniques

An honest assessment of the insurgent Iraq War, and particularly of its political and ideological dimensions, also illustrates that technology is not a panacea even for the warfighting part of the conflict. This is particularly true when the insurgency is far more "human-centric" than net-centric and when insurgency is mixed with civil ethnic and sectarian conflict.

For example, sensors, UAV, and IS&R can have great value in Iraq, just as they did in Vietnam and South Lebanon, but they are anything but "magic bullets." The unattended ground sensor program in Vietnam was once touted as such a magic bullet but took less than a year to defeat. Decades later, the Israelis tried using UAVs and unattended ground sensors in Southern Lebanon, and developed a remarkable amount of statistical evidence and technical data to indicate a more modern approach would work. In practices, the IDF's efforts led Hezbollah to develop more sophisticated tactics and IEDs at a fraction of the cost of the Israeli detection and defense effort, and Israel was eventually defeated. Both experiences are warnings about the limits of technology.

At a different level, the informal distributed networks and "swarming" of the Iraqi insurgents is a serious warning about the limits of technology-based efforts to rely on high technology formal networks and "swarming" of the kind Australia choose in its Complex Warfighting doctrine, and efforts to use small, semi-autonomous combat elements that can suddenly come together and "swarm" an enemy concentration with a mix of different joint force elements integrated by modern IS&R systems and battle management. This may work where the insurgency is small, and where the population is neutral, favorable to the outside force, and/or hostile to the insurgents. The Iraq War shows that it has very acute limits in a more modern state where political and military conditions are far less favorable.

The same is true of the similar British Future Land Operating Concept (FLOC) and so-called C-DICT (Countering Disorder, Insurgency, Criminality and Terrorism) approach. It is certainly wise to adopt a "system centric" approach that combines the human element, all elements of joint forces, and tailored IS&R and battle management. But, this is no solution to force density problems or the challenges raised by an insurgency that can still attack both below and above the level of operations that FLOC forces can use. It is a useful tool, but scarcely an answer to ideological and political warfare where the insurgent operates against different target at a different pace, and large elements of the population support the insurgency and/or are hostile to the counterinsurgents. Under these conditions, a foreign force with a different culture and religion can use such an approach to aid a local ally but cannot win on their own.

The US Army and Marine Corps approach to "distributed operations," and approaches to "Counterinsurgency "Small Wars," "a modular army," and "pacification." Come up against the same basic problem in a case like Iraq. Like the Australian and British approaches, they can have value under the right conditions. They become dangerous and self-defeating, however, the moment tactics and technology become ends in themselves, and the dominance of political and cultural factors are ignored. Mao's description of the people as a sea that insurgents can swim in, indistinguishable from all those around them, is no universal truth but it is a warning than in many cases, only allied forces and allied governance can prevent the outside force from losing to a vastly cheaper and smaller force simply because it is perceived as a crusader or occupier and the insurgency does not face an effective local government or mix of local forces.

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The “Undrainable Swamp”

These political risks illustrate another lesson that Iraq teaches about both counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. Many analysts have suggested that the key to victory is to remove the causes of terrorism or insurgency, to remove popular support for such movements and give terrorists and/or insurgents’ incentives to join civil society. In short, to “drain the swamp.”

The fundamental wisdom of such an approach is undeniable, but everything depends upon its feasibility. In the cases of Iraq, Vietnam, and many others, the problem is that the US cannot drain the swamp. It is dealing with a foreign country, different religions and ideologies, and different goals and values. It is perceived by a significant percentage of the people as an invader, occupier, neo-colonial power, “crusader,” or simply as selfishly serving its own strategic interests. Language alone presents serious problems, and American public diplomacy is too ethnocentric to be effective.

The US can encourage political, economic, and social reform, but cannot implement it. Like Iraqis, people must find their own leaders, political structures, and methods of governance. The US lacks basic competence in the economics of nation building in societies whose economic structures, ability to execute reforms and projects, and perceived values differ significantly from the US. Different cultures, human rights practices, legal methods, and religious practices can be influence to evolve in ways the US sees as positive, but there are no universal values, and the US cannot shape a different nation, culture, or religion.

In many cases, the sheer scale of the problem is also a major factor. Demographic, ethnic, and sectarian problems can take a generation or more to fully solve. Decades of economic failure, neglect, and discrimination can take a decade or more to fix. A lack of rule of law, working human rights, pragmatic and experienced leaders and political parties cannot be fixed by a few years of outside aid and education.

It should be stressed that this in no way means that the US cannot exert tremendous influence during a major counterinsurgency or counterterrorism campaign, or that the US should not seek reform and change. But, the swamp will almost always be undrainable unless a host government and power set of local political movements drive the process. Religious, cultural, and ideological reform must come largely from within. The local populace must see the reason for economic reform, and believe in it enough to act. Governance and security must be largely local to be perceived as legitimate. Equally important, if the swamp can be drained, the process will generally take so long that a US counterinsurgency campaign will be lost or won long before the process is completed.

The US failed to act on these realities in Vietnam. It began the Iraq War by rejecting them, and greatly strengthened the insurgency in the process while wasting critical months before it made effective efforts to help the Iraqis help themselves. More than two years after the “end” of the war, it still has not shaped an aid process focused around the Iraqis, local methods, local needs, and local methods and execution. Part of an effective counterinsurgency strategy is to honestly assess all of the underlying causes that sustain an insurgency, know what the US can credibly hope to do to address them, understand that the US will only be effective if local leaders can help themselves, and face the fact that so much time will be needed to fully deal with such problems that the US can normally only hope to start the process of reform and removing underlying causes during the duration of most counterinsurgency campaigns.
The Limits of Cheerleading and Self-Delusion

There is no way to avoid the fog of war, but there is no reason to make it a self-inflicted wound. Counterinsurgency cannot be fought on the basis of political slogans, official doctrine, ideology, and efforts to spin the situation in the most favorable terms. Unless warfighters and policymakers honestly address the complexity, unique characteristics, and risks and costs of a given conflict, they inevitably come up with solutions that, as the old joke states, are “simple, quick and wrong.” History shows all too clearly that this “simple, quick and wrong” approach is how Americans have created far too many past problems in US foreign policy, and that it is a disastrous recipe for war. In retrospect, fewer US failures occurred because it lacked foresight, than because it could not resist praising itself for progress that did not really exist and choosing simplicity at the expense of reality.

To use another old joke, Iraq is another case where Americans have tended to treat counterinsurgency as if were a third marriage, “a triumph of hope over experience.” The prior history of the insurgency shows that the US began by underestimating the scale of the problems it really had to face and just how many resources, how much time, and how expensive in dollars and blood the cost would be. Counterinsurgency campaigns cannot be based on hope and best cases if the US wants to win. American policy and military planners have to examine all of the variables, prioritize, and be very careful about the real-world importance of any risks and issues they dismiss. They must be ready for the near certainty of major problems and gross failure in unanticipated areas.

The reality is that counterinsurgency warfare is almost always a “worst case” or nations like the US would not become involved in it in the first place. The US and other Western states become involved in counterinsurgency because an ally has failed, because a friendly nation has failed. We become involved because diplomacy and foreign policy have failed. Almost by definition, counterinsurgency means things have already gone seriously wrong.

The New Fog of War and the "Law of Unintended Consequences"

Iraq is one more illustration of the reality that the "fog of war" evolves at the same rate as technology and tactics. Regardless of success in battle, no country can afford to ignore the fact that the course and outcome of counterinsurgency wars is inevitably affected by "law of unintended consequences." Risk analysis is remarkably difficult, because risk analysis is based on what we think we know going in, and that set of perceptions almost invariably proves to be seriously wrong over time. Both allies and enemies evolve in unpredictable ways. Political, social and economic conditions change inside the zone of conflict in ways the US and its allies cannot anticipate.

Wars broaden in terms of the political impact on regions and our global posture. Conflict termination proves to be difficult to impossible, or the real-world outcome over time becomes very different from the outcome negotiators thought would happen at the time. The reality proves far more dynamic and uncertain than is predicted going in; the fight requires far more time and resources necessary to accomplish anything than operators plan for.

All planning for counterinsurgency warfare must be based on the understanding that there is no way to eliminate all such uncertainties, and mistakes will inevitably be made that go far beyond the ones that are the result of political bias or ideology. There are some who would believe that if
only planners and analysts could work without political bias or interference, this would solve most of counterinsurgency problems. In reality, even the best planners and analysts will face major problems regardless of their political and military leadership. The scale of ignorance and uncertainty will inevitably be too great when we enter most counterinsurgency contingencies. The US and its allies must accept this as part of the price of going to war.

It is frightening to look back at the almost endless reams of analyses, plans, and solutions that people advanced in war colleges, think tanks and universities during the Vietnam War, El Salvador and Lebanon. Vietnam may have represented the nadir of American analysis, planning, and objectivity. However, Somalia, the Dayton accords, and Iraq also represented a failure to analyze the situation properly. Even when the US analyzed the situation well, it failed to translate this analysis into effective counterinsurgency plans and operational capabilities within the interagency process.

Moreover, time and again, the US drifted into trying to win in tactical terms rather than focusing on how it could achieve the desired national, regional, and grand strategy outcome. It forgot that it is only the endgame that counts, and not the means. It also forgets that slogans and rhetoric, ideology, and a failure to fully survey and assess ultimately all become a source of self-inflicted wounds or friendly fire.

**The Lesson of Strategic Indifference; Of Knowing When to Play -- and When Not to Play, the Counterinsurgency Game**

The seriousness of the insurgency in Iraq, and the costs and risks imposed by such a comparatively small insurgent force with so many tactical limitations, also raise a lesson the US seem to repeatedly learn at the end of counterinsurgency campaigns and then perpetually forget in entering into the next conflict. Not every game is worth playing, and sometimes the best way to win is not to play at all—even if this does mean years of instability and accepting the uncertainties of civil conflict.

It is far easier to blunder into a war like the Iraq War than blunder out. It is easy to dismiss the risks of becoming bogged down in local political strife, ignore the risks of counterinsurgency and civil conflict, downplay economic and security risks, and mischaracterize the situation by seeing the military side of intervention as too easy and the political need for action as too great. It is far too easy to exaggerate the threat. It is equally easy to both exaggerate the ability of a counterinsurgency campaign to achieve a desired strategic outcome and ignore the fact that history is often perfectly capable of solving a problem if the US does not intervene.

Personal anecdotes can lead to dangerous overgeneralizations, but they can also have value. A few years ago, I toured Vietnam, and saw from the Vietnamese side their vision of what had happened in the war. There were many tactical and political lessons I drew from that experience, one of which was how thoroughly we ignored what was happening to Buddhist perceptions and support at the political level while we concentrated on the tactical situation and the politics of Saigon.

The lesson I found most striking, however, was seeing the grand strategic outcome of the war as measured by even the most trivial metrics. I bought a bottle of mineral water in Hanoi airport and discovering that on the front label it said “USA Water,” while its back label stated that it had been processed through a 14-step process developed by NASA. When I looked at the toy
counter, I saw that the bulk of toys consisted of US fighters or fighters with US marking. When I
walked over to the news counter, I saw the “Investor’s Journal” in Vietnamese and English. This
was after being told repeatedly how glad the Vietnamese were that we stayed in Asia as a
deterrent to China. We were right in many ways about the domino theory, we just forgot that
dominoes could fall in two directions.

Is Counterinsurgency the Right Means to the End?

This raises another lesson the US needs to carefully evaluate in dealing with future security
problems and crises. Even if the game is worth playing, counterinsurgency may not be the way to
play it, particularly if the nation is divided along sectarian, ethnic, or tribal lines in ways where
there is no clear “good side” or positive force for change. Robert Osgood made the point a long
time ago that when a nation engages in limited war, it does it for limited purposes. If a nation
cannot keep the war and the purposes limited, it should not engage. History shows that it is
amazingly easy to forget this. There are times when a counterinsurgency campaign is necessary
or will be forced on the US from the outside, but there are many times when the US has a choice
of the means it can use to achieve a given end, and can choose options other than
counterinsurgency.

Containment is one such option. Every reader will have to decide for him or herself if they had
known when we went the Coalition went into Iraq what they know today, whether they would
still have rejected containment as the option? If one considers military involvement in Iran or
Syria, they same issues arise as to whether containment and diplomacy are quite that bad a
choice versus expanding a limited war or regime change -- at least by force?

If containment is not a substitute for counterinsurgency, the US must ask whether it should take
advantage of military options where it retains advantages insurgents cannot counter: the ability to
carry out selective strikes with limited cost. Placing US forces on the ground where they must
conduct a major counterinsurgency or counterterrorism campaign is far more costly and risk-
oriented than using limited amounts of force in precision strikes or other carefully limited forms.
Sanctions and sustained political pressure often have severe limits, but they too can sometimes
achieve the desired result in ways that are less costly than counterinsurgency.

Even when a counterinsurgency or counterterrorism campaign is necessary, using US forces may
often be the wrong answer. It is true that the US will normally only consider engaging in
counterinsurgency because the nation it is going to fight is weak or divided. Far too often,
however, we seem to commit our forces to combat. In many cases, it will still be better to rely on
the local ally and build up their forces, even if this means a higher risk of losing in what is, after
all, a limited war.

No nation is very likely to stay a “failed nation.” This does not mean, however, that the US can
“fix” any given country in the face of massive political and social divisions, economic weakness
or collapse, and/or ideological and religious turmoil. The world’s worst problems are its most
tragic problems, but this does not mean that the US can decisively change them with affordable
amounts of force, aid, and efforts at political reform. If anything, Iraq is a warning that the US
does not know how to measure and characterize the risks of intervention, is not structured to
combine nation building and counterinsurgency on a massive scale, and cannot impose its system
and values on another people unless they actually want them. In retrospect, the US could almost
certainly have done far more good spreading the same resources among the nations and peoples.
where they would have had real benefits, and by concentrating on the wars it actually had to fight.

At the same time, these are questions that events in Iraq may still answer in ways that given both the Coalition and the Iraqi people enough of a victory to defeat the insurgency. The right answer in future crisis may never be clear, easy to choose, or be the same for different crises and problems. It is also important to emphasize, that that the lessons of Iraq are scarcely that the US should not use and improve its counterinsurgency techniques. It is rather a warning that the US and other powers should only engage directly in counterinsurgency after it assesses the costs, risks, ability to achieve the desired end objective, and alternative means honestly and in depth.

**Counterinsurgency Does Not always Mean Winning**

There is a grimmer lesson from the evolution of the insurgency in Iraq. It is a lesson that goes firmly against the American grain, but it is a natural corollary of limited war. If the course of the political and military struggle shows the US that it cannot achieve the desired grand strategic outcome, it needs to accept the fact that the US must find ways to terminate a counterinsurgency war. Defeat, withdrawal, and acceptance of an outcome less than victory are never desirable in limited war, but they are always acceptable. For all the arguments about prestige, trust, and deterrence, there is no point in pursuing a limited conflict when it becomes more costly than the objective is worth or when the probability of achieving that objective becomes too low.

This is a lesson that goes against American culture. The whole idea that the US can be defeated is no more desirable for Americans than for anyone else, in fact, almost certainly less so. But when the US lost in Vietnam it not only lived with the reality, it ultimately did not suffer from it. When the US failed in Lebanon and Haiti, it failed at almost no perceptible cost. Exiting Somalia was not without consequences, but they were scarcely critical.

This does not mean that the US should not stay in Iraq as long as it has a good chance of achieving acceptable objectives at an acceptable cost. But, it does mean that the US can afford to lose in Iraq, particularly for reasons that are frankly beyond its control and which the world will recognize as such. There is no point in “staying the course” through a major Iraqi civil war, a catastrophic breakdown of the political process, or a government coming to power that simply asks us to leave. In all three cases, it isn’t a matter of winning or losing, but instead, facing a situation where conditions no longer exist for staying.

**Telling the Truth About Risks and the Value of Strategic Objectives**

In the future, the US will need to pay far more attention to the option of declaring that it is fighting a limited war for limited objectives if it really is a limited war. It may well need to fully explain what the limits to its goals and level of engagement are and develop a strategy for implementing, communicating and exploiting these limits. One mistake is to tell the host government, or the people you are fighting with, that your commitment is open-ended and that you can never leave; the incentive for responsibility vanishes with it.

Similarly, if you tell the American people and the world that a marginal strategic interest is vital, the world will sooner or later believe it, which is very dangerous if you have to leave or lose. You are better off saying you may lose, setting limits, and then winning, than claiming that you can’t lose, having no limits, and then losing. This should not be a massive, innovative lesson, but it is one we simply do not seem prepared to learn.
If the US Must Fight a Counterinsurgency Campaign, It Must Focus Firmly on the Strategic, Political, and Allied Dimension of the Fighting

The evolution of the insurgency in Iraq is yet another lesson in the fact that focusing on the military dimension of war is an almost certain path to grand strategic defeat in any serious conflict, and particularly in counterinsurgency in a weak and divided nation. If the US must engage in counterinsurgency warfare, and sometimes it must, then it needs to plan for both the complexity and cost of successful conflict termination and ensuring a favorable grand strategic outcome. It must prepare for the risk of long-term engagement and escalation, civil war and ethnic and sectarian conflict, and risks that will require more forces and resources. If such “long wars” are too costly relative to the value of the objective, the US must set very clear limits to what it will do based on the limited grand strategic value of the outcome and act upon them -- regardless of short-term humanitarian costs.

The US needs to prepare for, and execute, a full spectrum of conflict. That means doing much more than seeking to win a war militarily. It needs to have the ability to make a valid and sustainable national commitment in ideological and political terms. It must find ways of winning broad local and regional support; stability operations and nation building are the price of any meaningful counterinsurgency campaign.

The US Normally Cannot Win Serious Counterinsurgency Wars Unless It Creates an Ally and Partner Who Can Govern and Secure the Place Where the US is Fighting.

Iraq, like so many other serious Post-WWII insurgencies, shows that successful counterinsurgency means having or creating a local partner that can take over from US forces and that can govern. Both Vietnam and Iraq show the US cannot win an important counterinsurgency campaign alone. The US will always be dependent on the people in the host country, and usually on local and regional allies. To some extent, it will be dependent on the quality of its operations in the UN, in dealing with traditional allies and in diplomacy. If the US can’t figure out a way to have or create such an ally, and fight under these conditions, a counterinsurgency conflict may well not be worth fighting.

This means the US must do far more than creating effective allied forces. In most cases, it will have to find a way to reshape the process of politics and governments to create some structure in the country that can actually act in areas it "liberates." Pacification is the classic example. If the US or its allies can’t deploy allied police forces and government presence, the result is far too often to end up with a place on the map where no one in his right mind would go at night.

Economics and Counterinsurgency: Dollars Must Be Used as Effectively as Bullets

The US must be prepared to use aid and civic action dollars as well as bullets, and the US military has done far better in this area in Iraq than it has in the past. Unfortunately, the history of the insurgency shows that the same cannot be said for USAID in Washington, or for any

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aspect of the economic planning effort under the CPA. The US ignored the economic and related political and cultural realities of nation building going into Iraq and ignores the economic realities now.

Every independent assessment of the US aid effort warns just how bad the US performance has been in these areas -- even in critical areas like the oil industry. The US has now have spent or committed its way through nearly $20 billion, and has virtually no self-sustained structural economic change to show for it. Most aid projects spend more money on overhead, contractors, and security than gets to Iraqis in the field. It can’t protect most of its aid projects; for too much of post March 2003 Iraqi economic "growth" is illusory and comes from US waste and wartime profiteering.

Self-congratulatory measures of achievement are mindless. Who cares how much money the US spends or how many buildings it creates, unless this effort goes to the right place and has a lasting impact. The number of school buildings completed is relevant unless there are books, teachers, furniture, students and security, and the buildings go to troubled areas as well as secure ones. Bad or empty buildings leave a legacy of hostility, not success. Empty or low capacity clinics don’t win hearts and minds. Increasing peak power capacity is meaningless unless the right people actually get it.

**Long Wars Mean Long Plans and Long Expenditures**

The US announced on February 4th that its new Quadrennial Defense Review was based on a strategy of long wars, and an enduring conflict with terrorists and Islamist extremists. As the Iraq War and so many similar conflicts have shown, "long wars" can also take the form of long nation buildings, long stability operations, and long counter insurrections. This means they can only be fought with patience, over a period of years, and with sustained investment in terms of US presence, military expenditures, and aid money.

In the case of Iraq, virtually every senior officer and official came to realize by 2005 that a short campaign plan had failed to prepare the US and Coalition for a meaningful effort, helped create a serious insurgency, and led to a situation that cost thousands of additional killed and wounded and meant tens of billions of addition dollars were needed to have any chance of success. Talk of major reductions in US forces moved to end-2006, and many experts talked about 2007. Most senior serving officers privately talked about a major advisory and combat support effort through 2010. A "three month" departure had turned into what threatened to be a decade-long presence if the US and its allies were to succeed. Estimates of total costs in the hundreds of billions of dollars that senior officials in the Bush Administration had dismissed in going to war had already become a reality, and the US was well on its way to a war that would cost at least 3,000 dead and 20,000 wounded.

The message is clear. Any plan for counterinsurgency and stability operations must include years of effort, not months. Spending plans for military operations and all forms of aid must be shaped accordingly. The American tendency to begin operations with the same plan for immediate success -- "simple, quick, and wrong" -- needs to be replaced with an honest assessment of the fact that history takes time. The tendency to oversell the ease of operations, demand quick and decisive success, is a natural one for both policymakers and senior military officers. It is also a path to failure and defeat. At best, it is likely to be paid for in unnecessary body bags and billions of dollars.
Honestly Winning the Support of the American People

The sharp gap between the evolution of the insurgency described in the preceding analysis, and the almost endless US efforts to use the media and politics to "spin" a long and uncertain counterinsurgency campaign into turning points and instant victory, has done America, the Bush Administration, and the American military great harm. Spin and shallow propaganda loose wars rather than win them. They ultimately discredit a war, and the officials and officers who fight it.

Iraq shows that it is critical that an Administration honestly prepares the American people, the Congress and it allies for the real nature of the war to be fought. To do so, it must prepare them to sustain the expense and sacrifice through truth, not spin. But there is only so much shallow spin that the American people or Congress will take. It isn’t a matter of a cynical media or a people who oppose the war; rubbish is rubbish. If the US “spins” each day with overoptimistic statements and half-truths, it embarks on a process that will sooner or later deprive itself of credibility -- both domestically and internationally.

Iraq is also yet another warning that serious counterinsurgency campaigns often take five to fifteen years. They don’t end conveniently with an assistant secretary or a President’s term in office. Again and again we deny the sheer length of serious counterinsurgencies. Planners, executers, and anyone who explains and justifies such wars needs to be far more honest about the timescales involved, just how long we may have to stay, and that even when an insurgency is largely over, there may be years of aid and advisory efforts.

Lessons for Warfighting

Finally, this analysis of the insurgency raises lesson about warfighting, that go beyond the details of military strategy and tactics, and provide broader lessons that have been surprisingly consistent over the more than 40 years from Vietnam to Iraq.

• First, warfighters must focus relentlessly on the desired outcome of the war and not simply the battle or overall military situation. In strategic and grand strategic terms, it doesn’t matter how well the war went last month; it doesn’t matter how the US is doing tactically. The real question warfighters must ask is whether the US is actually moving toward a strategic outcome that serves the ultimate interests of the US? If warfighters don’t know, they should not spend the lives of American men and women in the first place.

The US, and any military force engaging in counterinsurgency warfare, should teach at every level that stability operations and conflict termination are the responsibility of every field-grade officer. (And, for that matter, every civilian.) Warfighters need to act on the principle that every tactical operation must have a political context and set of goals. The US needs to tie its overall campaign plan to a detailed plan for the use of economic aid at every level, from simple bribery to actually seeking major changes in the economy of a given country.

• Second, warfighters need to understand, as Gen. Rupert Smith has pointed out, and as Iraq has shown, that enemies will make every effort to try to win counterinsurgency conflicts by finding ways to operate below or above the threshold of conventional military superiority. It is stupid, as some in the US military have done, to call Iraqi insurgents cowards or terrorists because they will not fight on our terms. The same remarkably stupid attitudes appeared in 19th century colonial wars and often cost those foolish enough to have them the battle. The Mahdi’s victories in the Sudan are a good case example.

The US has to be able to fight in ways that defeat insurgents and terrorists regardless of how they fight. Insurgents are not cowards for fighting us in any way that does so at the highest cost to us and the least cost to them. If they can fight below the US threshold of conventional superiority, then technology is at best a limited supplement to US human skills, military professionalism, and above all, our ability to find ways to strengthen local allies.
It is far more important, for example to have effective local forces than more technology. Net-centric is not a substitute for human-centric, and for that matter, human-centric isn’t a substitute for competent people down at the battalion level. Systems don’t win. Technology doesn’t win.

- Third, warfighters and their political leaders need to acknowledge that enemies can fight above the threshold of US conventional ability, not just beneath it. The character of America’s political system, culture, and values are not the answer to winning the political and ideological dimension of many counterinsurgency campaigns. There is no reason Americans should think they can win an ideological struggle over the future of Islam and/or the Arab world. Our Muslim and Arab allies, in contrast, may well be able to win this struggle, particular if the US works with them and not against them.

US public diplomacy and political actions can have a major impact in aiding counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. But, Iraq shows that the local, cultural, ethnic, religious, and political issues have to be fought out in such wars largely by our ally on the ground and other Islamic states. The US can help, but cannot win, or dominate, the battle for hearts and minds. Moreover, only regional allies with the right religion, culture, and legitimacy can cope with the growing ability of ideologically driven opponents to find the fault lines that can divide us from local allies by creating increased ethnic and sectarian tensions.

- Fourth, although the US does need to improve its counterinsurgency technology, it cannot win with “toys.” Technology is a tool and not a solution. Israeli technology failed in Lebanon as US technology did in Vietnam, and some of the same IED systems that helped defeat Israel have now emerged in Iraq: twin IR sensors, shaped charges, radio-controlled devices, and foam painted to look like rocks. Like Israel, the US can use technical means to defeat many IEDs, but not enough. Moreover, it is possible that the total cost of every insurgent IED to date is still lower than that cost of one AH-1S that went down over Iraq.

- Fifth, the force must have the right balance of numbers and expertise. Many have argued since the beginning of the Iraq War that the Coalition needed far more manpower for stability operations. This is a solution to some problems, where a simple security presence will deter terrorism and the growth of an insurgency. It is, also, however, a dangerous illusion in other cases. Large numbers of forces that will never have the right language and area skills with any serious proficiency, which lack the necessity specialist training, and have a different culture and religion will simply compound local resentments and the feeling the US or US-led force is at best an occupier and at worst an enemy. “Stabilizers” can easily become targets, and deployed large numbers of forces means more incidents with the local population, more problems in getting the host country to take responsibility, the growth of more rear-area military bureaucracy, and dealing with large number of no or little-purpose troops that need to be protected.

At the same time, too few ordinary troops can be equally dangerous, particularly in establishing initial security and presence. Small elites cannot do large or routine jobs. There must be enough military and civilians in country to establish basic security. There is no point in wasting Special Forces, translators, military police, counterinsurgency counterterrorism experts, civil-military experts and other scarce elite forces in “presence” and “support” missions.

Finding the right balance will be difficult and case specific, and must deal with contingency risks and not simply the outcome policymakers and military planners want. The key to success is to fit the force to the case, and not to the desire or the doctrine.

- Sixth, the best “force multiplier” will be effective allies, and interoperability with a true partner. If it is true that the US can win most counterinsurgency campaigns if it creates strong allies, the US must act decisively on this principle. US victories will often only be a means to this end. The real victories come when the US has allied troops that can operate against insurgents in the field, and a friendly government to carry out nation building and civil action activities at the same time. The US really begins to win when it can find ways to match the military, political, economic, and governance dimension.

Creating a real partnership with allies also means respect; it doesn’t mean creating proxies or tools. It means recognizing that creating the conditions for effective governance and police are as important as the military. So is the creation of effective ministries. Iraq shows all too clearly that this kind of warfare, if you focus on the ministry of defense and ignore the ministry of the interior or the ministry of finance, just doesn’t work.
In most places, the actual counterinsurgency battle is local and as dependent on police and effective governance as effective military forces. In hyper-urbanized areas, which represent many of the places where we fight, the city is the key, at least as much as the national government. And, incidentally, Iraq has already shown time after time that it is difficult to sustain any victory without a lasting presence by local police and government offices.

**Seventh, political legitimacy in counterinsurgency is measured in local terms and not in terms of American ideology.** Effective warfighting means the US must recognize something about regional allies that goes against its present emphasis on “democracy.” In most of the world, “legitimacy” has little to do with governments being elected, and a great deal to do with governments being popular.

By all means, hold elections when they do more good than harm. But, bringing the people security, the rule of law, human rights, and effective governance is far more important. In many cases, elections may be disruptive or bring people to power that are more of a problem than a solution. This is particularly true if elections come without the preconditions of mature political parties, economic stability a firm rule of law, and checks and balances. In most cases, the US and its allies will still need to worry about the people who don’t win—people, ethnicities, and sects who will not have human rights protection. (If anyone thinks there is a correlation between democracy and human rights, congratulations, they got through college without ever reading Thucydides. The Melian dialogue is the historical rule, not the exception.)

**Eighth, the US needs to have a functional interagency process and partner our military with effective civilian counterparts.** Iraq has shown that political leaders and senior military cannot afford to bypass the system, or to lack support from the civilian agencies that must do their part from the outset. The US needs to begin by deciding on the team it needs to go to war, and then make that team work. It is one of the oddities historically that Robert McNamara got his largest increase in US troops deployed to Vietnam by bypassing the interagency process. The Bush Administration began by going through an interagency process before the war, but largely chose to ignore it after January of 2003.

This is the wrong approach. Counterinsurgency wars are as much political and economic as military. They require political action, aid in governance, economic development and attention to the ideological and political dimension. The US can only succeed here if the interagency process can work.

At another level, the US needs civilian risk-takers. It needs a counterpart to the military in the field. There is no point in supporting the staffing of more interagency coordination bodies in Washington unless their primary function is to put serious resources into the field. The US is not going to win anything by having better interagency coordination, and more meetings, unless the end result is to put the right mix of people and resources out in the countryside where the fighting takes place.

The US needs to put a firm end to the kind of mentality that overstaff the State Department and intelligence community in Washington, and doesn’t require career civilians to take risks in the field. Foreign Service officers should not be promoted, in fact should be selected out, unless they are willing to take risks. The US can get all of the risk takers we want. There already is a flood of applications from qualified people. It can also ensure continuity and expertise by drawing on the brave group of people already in Iraq and Afghanistan -- a remarkable number of whom are already contract employees -- and giving them career status.

In the process, the US also needs to “civilianize” some aspects of its military. It needs to improve both their area and language skills, create the added specialized forces it needs for stability and nation building operations, and rethink tour length for military who work in critical positions and with allied forces. Personal relationships are absolutely critical in the countries where the US is most likely to fight counterinsurgency wars. So is area expertise and continuity in intelligence.

Counterinsurgency needs a core of military and civilians who will accept 18 month to 24-month tours in key slots. The problem today is often that the selection system does not focus on the best person but rather on external personnel and career planning considerations. Moreover, it fails to recognize that those who take such additional risks should be paid for it in full, and be given different leave policies and promotion incentives. Today, a soldier that is only a battalion commander is only a battalion commander. The key officers are those with area and counterinsurgency skills that go beyond the combat unit level. Those
officers need to have more diverse skills, and deal adequately with the broader dimension of war, and stay long enough to be fully effective.

Finally, human-centric warfare does not mean "super-soldiers" or super-intelligence officers. Military forces -- and the civilian support needed for stability operations, nation building, and counterinsurgency -- do need better training in the nature of such operations, local languages, and local cultures. But, military forces and civilians that are outstanding is a dangerous illusion. Effective operations require both adequate force quality and adequate force quantity, and the understanding that most people are, by definition, "average." Elites are an essential part of military operations, but only a part.

This demand for elites and super-intelligence officers is a particular problem for warfighting intelligence, given the limits of today's technical systems and means. It is also a problem because Iraq shows that developing effective US-led and organized HUMINT may often be impossible.

It is true that better intelligence analysis and HUMINT are critical. But, there will be many times in the future where we will also have to go into counterinsurgency campaigns without being able to put qualified Americans in the field quickly enough to recruit effective agents and develop effective HUMINT on our own.

Does that mean HUMINT isn't important? Of course it doesn't; it is a useful tool. But to create effective HUMINT abilities to deal with security issues, the US will need an effective local partner in most serious cases of both counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. Having allied countries, allied forces, or allied elements, develop effective HUMINT will be a critical answer to US shortcomings.
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