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Iraq's Evolving Insurgency

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Please note that this is part of a rough working draft of a CSIS book that will be published by Praeger in the fall of 2005. It is being circulated to solicit comments and additional data, and will be steadily revised and updated over time.

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I. Introduction

The fall of Saddam Hussein would have exposed deep fracture lines in an impoverished Iraq, almost regardless of how it occurred. One key legacy of the British “divide and rule” tactics that formed the state was minority Arab Sunni rule over a state that had come to have an Arab Shi’ite majority of some 60% of the population, and Kurdish, Turcoman, and other minorities that made up another 20%. Iraq’s violent politics had further compounded these problems by bring a leader to power who never tolerated political dissent, and began the bloody purging and suppression of all organized political resistance when he took full power in 1979.

Saddam Hussein’s “Powder keg”

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 modernized or made productive, inefficient state-industries undercut development as did a rigid state-controlled financial sector and 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. Eight years of war crippled the development of the nation’s infrastructure, education, and efforts to properly develop its oil wealth. In 1990, Saddam Hussein’s efforts to solve his economic problems by invading Kuwait led to a massive military defeat, a new massive burden of reparations for the war, and then to more than a decade of UN and international sanctions further crippling every aspect of the nations development.

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.

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 back 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, but 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, and force 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.¹

From 1991 until the Coalition invasion in 2003, Saddam Hussein created further political problems by encouraging tribal divisions and favoring those tribes and clans that supported his rule and regime. He exploited religion by increasing 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, state funds, and the UN oil for food program for his own benefit, further undercutting economic development. 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. It also was 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.

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, and fueled by both its original heritage of ethnic and sectarian division and 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 the US chose a strategy whose post-conflict goals were unrealistic and impossible to achieve,

and only planned for the war it wanted to fight and not for the “peace” that was certain to follow.

Its most obvious mistake was its basic rationale for going to war: A threat from based on intelligence estimates of Iraqi efforts to create weapons of mass destruction that the US later found did not exist. At a grand strategic level, however, 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 of insurgency in Iraq.

The full chronology of what happened is still far from clear, and its far easier to accuse given US leaders that it is to understand what really happened or assign responsibility with any 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.

At the same time, it is also clear that 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 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.

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.

The fact the US failed to plan for meaningful stability operations and nation building was the most serious strategic mistake that led to the insurgency and crime that are the focus of this analysis, but these mistakes were compounded by other problems:

A failure to accurately assess the nature of Iraqi nationalism, the true level of culture differences, and the scale of Iraq problems. This failure of 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 than the current population of 25-26 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.

The failure to plan and execute effective broader information operations before, during and after the invasion to win the “hearts and minds of Iraqis,” persuade them that the Coalition came a liberators that would leave rather than occupiers who would stay and exploit Iraq, and that the Coalition would provide aid and support to an truly independent government and state. A secondary failure to anticipate and defuse the flood of conspiracy theories certain to follow Coalition military action.

The failure to create and provide anything approaching the kind and number of civilian elements in the US government, necessary for nation building and stability operations. These problems were particular serious in 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.

The 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.

Broad failures by what a leading officer involved in planning operations in Iraq by “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.

Over-reliance on exile groups with limited credibility and influence in Iraq.

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.

Miscalculations about UN support, NATO & coalitions, and transit through Turkey.

Failing to the provided 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: A process that effectively destroyed the existing structure of governance and security without making any initial 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.²

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 did not even come to Baghdad until April 21, 2003 -- twelve days after US forces -- on the grounds it did not have suitable security.

Failing not only to anticipate the threat of insurgency and outside extremist infiltration, in spite of significant intelligence warning, but 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.

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, and then attempting to carry out the resulting mission along heavily ideological lines that attempt to impose American methods and values on Iraq.

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.

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.

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.

A failure to honestly assess the nature and size of the Iraqi insurgency as it grew and became steadily more dangerous.

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.

A 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.

Planning for several years of occupation, once the CPA was created, and for a situation where a US-led coalition could improve its own values and judgments about the Iraqi people, politics, economy, and social structure for a period of some three years – rather than 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. Even then, it failed to make its plans sufficiently convincing to much of the Iraqi people.

It is perfectly true that foresight is far more difficult than "20-20 hindsight." Many, if not most, of these problems 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, and in interagency forums. 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 also pushed the US to the limit of the ground forces it could easily deploy. They help cause the death of well over 1,500 Americans and other coalition forces after Saddam had fallen and the war had ended, and wounded well over 10,000. They also helped to kill and wound tens of thousands of Iraqis. It is also important to note that they laid the ground work for many of the problems in creating effective Iraqi forces, and that responsibility cannot be allocated to the US military and civilians in the field. No one can claim "20-20 hindsight" or that all of these failures were avoidable. The

fact remains, however, that every failure listed was ultimately a failure 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.

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Its most obvious mistake was its basic rationale for going to war: A threat from based on intelligence estimates of Iraqi efforts to create weapons of mass destruction that the US later found did not exist. At a grand strategic level, however, 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 of insurgency in Iraq.

The full chronology of what happened is still far from clear, and its far easier to accuse given US leaders that it is to understand what really happened or assign responsibility with any 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.

At the same time, it is also clear that far 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 and 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.

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A failure not only to anticipate the threat of insurgency and outside extremist infiltration, in spite of significant intelligence warning, but 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.

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.

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.

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 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.

A failure to honestly assess the nature and size of the Iraqi insurgency as it grew and became steadily more dangerous.

The failure to provide, or even have available, anything like the civilian elements in the US government, necessary for nation building and stability operations. These problems were particularly serious in 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.

Then creating an occupation authority that planned for several years of occupation, as if a US-led coalition could improve its own values and judgments about the Iraqi people, politics, economy, and social structure for a period of some three years – rather than 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. Even then, it failed to make its plans sufficiently convincing to much of the Iraqi people.

It is perfectly true that foresight is far harder than "20-20 hindsight." Many, if not most, of these problems 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, and in Interagency forums. 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.

II. The Growth and Character of the Insurgent Threat

The end result of these complex forces is that the US-led Coalition initially tried to restrict the development of Iraqi armed forces to a token force geared to defend Iraq's borders against external aggression. It did not try to create police forces with the capability to deal with serious insurgency and security challenges. As time went on, it ignored or did not give proper priority to the warnings from US military advisory teams about the problems in organizing and training Iraqi forces, and in giving them the necessary equipment and facilities.

The US failed to treat the Iraqis as partners in the counterinsurgency effort for nearly a year after the fall of Saddam Hussein, and 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.³

Denial as a Method of Counter-Insurgency Warfare

Both US policymakers and the US military initially lived in a state of near-denial over 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.⁴

Failing to Admit the Scope of the Problem though Mid-2004

As a result, the US failed to come to grips with the Iraqi insurgency during the first year of US occupation in virtually every important dimension. It 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 did begin to understand that terrorist and insurgent threat was serious and growing by the fall of 2003.

For all of 2003, and most of the first half of 2004, however, senior US officials and officers did not act on this plan or respond effectively to the growing insurgency. They kept referring to the attackers as terrorists, kept issuing estimates that they could not

number more than 5,000, and claimed they were a mixture of outside elements and diehard former regime loyalists (FRLs) that had little popular support. The US largely ignored the previous warnings provided by Iraqi opinion polls, and claimed that its 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.

As late as July 2004, some senior members of the Bush Administration still seemed to live in a fantasyland in terms of their public announcements, perception of the growing Iraqi hostility to the use of Coalition forces, and the size of the threat. Its spokesmen were still talking about a core insurgent force of only 5,000, when many Coalition experts on the ground in Iraq saw the core as at least 12,000-16,000. They also ignored signs of Sunni versus Shi'ite tension, and growing ethnic tension in the north.

Such US estimates of the core structure of the Iraqi insurgency ignored the true nature of the insurgency. The US was dealing with a mixture of Iraqi nationalism, Sunni resentment and anger, and popular opposition to any form of Western occupation. The problem was broad support, not a small group of "bitter enders." From the start, there were many part-time insurgents and criminals who worked with insurgents. In some areas, volunteers could be quickly recruited and trained, both for street fighting and terrorist and sabotage missions.

As in most insurgencies, "sympathizers" within the Iraqi government and Iraqi forces, as well as the Iraqis working for the Coalition, media, and NGOs, often provided excellent human intelligence without violently taking part in the insurgency. Saboteurs can readily operate within the government and every aspect of the Iraqi economy.

From the start, 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" provides warning, tells insurgents what attacks do and do not work, and allows them to coordinate their attacks to reinforce those of other insurgent cells and groups. As in all insurgencies, a race developed between the insurgents and the Coalition and Iraqi Interim Government forces to see whose strength could grow faster and who best learns from their enemies.

Evolving Threat Tactics and Pressure on Government Forces

During the summer and fall of 2003, Iraqi insurgents emerged as effective forces with significant popular support in Arab Sunni areas, and developed a steadily more sophisticated mix of tactics. In the process, as Chapter XII and Appendix A describe in detail, a native and foreign Islamist extremist threat also developed which deliberately tried to divide Iraq's Sunni Arabs from its Arab Shi'ites, Kurds, and other Iraqi minorities. By the fall of the 2004, this had some elements of a low-level civil war, and by June 2005, it threatened to escalate into a far more serious civil conflict.

There are no reliable unclassified counts of insurgent attacks and incidents, or of the casualties on both sides – an issue also discussed in depth in Chapter XII. The US only publicly reported on its own casualties, and the Iraqi government stopped making its own estimates public. Estimates of insurgent casualties are also tenuous at best.

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 device (IED), 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 device (IED), direct fire weapons, and indirect fire weapons to around 300. There was also, however, a slow increase in attacks using VBIEDs.

Attack distribution also varies, with a steadily rising number of attacks in the area of Mosul in the north. Baghdad, however, has been 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 Ninewa 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.

Since the Shi'ite fighting with Sadr has ceased, the peak of insurgent activity in the south has declined. There have been relatively low levels of attack in the Karbala, Thi-Qar, Wassit, Missan, Muthanna, Najaf, and Qaddisyaa governorates.

Irbil, Dahok, and Sulaymaniyah are northern governorates administrated by the two Kurdish Regional Governments (KRGs) and have long been relatively peaceful.

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 2004 to October 2004 is shown in Figure 2 below, and helps illustrate the continuing diversity of the attacks and that far more than American casualties were involved from the start of the conflict:

Figure 2**Illustrative Patterns in Targeting and Casualties (September 2003-October 2004)**

Target	Number of Attacks/Incidents	Killed	Wounded
Coalition Forces	3227	451	1002
Coalition Air Convoy	49	55	32
CPA/US Officials/Green Zone	32	60	206
Diplomatic Mission	11	7	9
Local Authority	31	56	81
Contractor	113	210	203
Civilian	180	1981	3467
Criminal & Suspect	49	31	972
ICDC	58	191	310
Kurds Army	31	25	8
Police	209	480	1012
UN	67	2	3
IO	1	2	0
NGO	5	5	11
Journalist	8	27	38
Interpreter	7	17	6
Public Property	182	5	15
Unspecified	43	1	1

Political, Psychological, and Information Warfare Lessons

The goals and methods of the strategy and tactics the insurgents used evolved steadily after the summer and fall of 2003. Almost from the beginning, Iraqi insurgents, terrorists, and extremists 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 insurgency. The fact that there were different groups of insurgents and terrorists also led the patterns of insurgent activity to evolve in ways that included a steadily wider range of tactics that each group of actors exploited whenever it found them to be convenient, and which all groups of attackers could refine with time.

Insurgents 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.

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: 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, 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.⁵ These attacks included cases where 58 corpses were dumped in the Tigris, and 19 largely Shi'ite National Guardsmen were found dead 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.⁶

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 into a political gathering in Irbil on February 1, 2004, and killed 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 at least 150 others.⁷ At the same time, other attacks systematically targeted Kurdish leaders and Kurdish elements in Iraqi forces.

By May 2005, this began to provoke Shi'ite reprisals, 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 bodies began to be discovered in unmarked graves, as well as Shi'ite ones, and killings struck at both Sunni and Shi'ite clergy.⁸

In many ways, insurgent tactics – particularly those of Sunni Islamist extremists – have evolved from attacks on the Coalition to attacks that included the emerging Iraqi government to sectarian attacks on Shi'ites, Kurds, and even other Sunnis deliberately designed to provoke chaos and civil war.

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 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, 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.⁹

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. 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.

The continuing threat to electric facilities forced many Iraqis to rely on home or neighborhood generators even in the areas with power, rolling power cuts in most areas, and major shortages in others. 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.¹⁰

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. Many projects had to be cancelled and \$1 billion of the \$3.65 billion allocated in US aid had to be diverted to security needs. There were a total of 15 water project starts in 2004, but none were planned for 2005.¹¹

Strike at US and other aid projects 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 2004.¹² 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, with 303 killed.¹³

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."

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.¹⁴

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 raid on Abu Ghraib prison in early April 2005 was an example of such a raid.¹⁵ As the chronology in the Appendix shows, they also involve suicide bombing and infiltration attacks on the "Green Zone"

in Baghdad and other major US military facilities in areas like Mosul. The use of Iraqi uniforms, security and army vehicles, false IDs, and intelligence gained from infiltrators also became more sophisticated.

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, 2005.¹⁶

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.

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.¹⁷

Kidnap, kill, and/or intimidate professionals, Iraqi media and intelligentsia, “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.¹⁸

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.¹⁹

“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 away, undermine secular and moderate regimes in the Arab and Islamic worlds, and create 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 secular 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, or incident, the better, even if it involves Iraqi military, security, and police forces. 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.

" Body dumps" became a variation on this theme: The bodies of Iraqi forces and other Iraqis would be dumped in areas like rivers, soccer stadiums, and other public places where they were found without any clear picture of who had killed them and why, and sometimes who the bodies were. In mid March 2005, for example, some 80 bodies were found in four dumps in Iraq, many of whom were police officers and soldiers. Somewhat ironically, a small dump of seven bodies of Zarqawi loyalists, seeming killed by other Sunnis, were found the same week.²⁰

Deprive the central, regional, and local governments' efforts to expand legitimacy. Attack nation-building and stability targets: 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.

Confuse the identity of the attacker; exploit conspiracy theories: 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.

As of yet, the number of false flag operations has been limited. However, 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.

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.

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 shelter in towns along the route from the Syrian border along the Euphrates, and through Qaim, Rawa, Haithah, and Fallujah to Baghdad. Insurgents also sheltered 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 could then regroup – at least in those cases where no permanent garrison and defense force was deployed and the Iraqi government did not provide effective governance.²¹

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.

Kidnap, kill, and attack official envoys and diplomats from Muslim countries seeking to engage the Jafari government. This limits 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. Such attacks can make the Iraqi government look powerless.

Kill members of the constitutional committee either to discourage participation, or in the case of the Sunni delegation, deprive 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.

Lessons About Methods of Attack and 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 on directly attacking 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:

Mix crude and sophisticated IEDs: Hezbollah should be given credit for having first perfected 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.²²

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 1987.²³ Insurgents had also learned how to make crude shaped-charges to attack US armored and other vehicles.

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 Hezbollah in Lebanon. In addition, the insurgents had learned to cluster and stack anti-tank mines, and use brute force IEDs like adapted 500-pound bombs.²⁴ They also learned the vulnerabilities of US and Coalition armored vehicles, and which held the most troops and/or 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 was made of foreign volunteers, Iraqis recruited with little background, and Iraqis paid small sums to do part of the work in implanting IEDs.

Small, largely independent cells came to carry out many operations – a technique which ensured that operations were hard to detect and penetrate and 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 quickly on a target of opportunity basis to defeat surveillance and patrols. Al Qa'ida in Iraq and Ansaar al Islam became particularly skilled in such operations. In short, the insurgents advanced both their IED technology and tactics in tandem.²⁵

The insurgents also paid close attention to US intelligence collection methods, and counter-IED operations and change their behavior accordingly. They also use improved methods of concealment, like digging holes in a road and then "paving over" the hole. Other methods have included stealing police, military, and government vehicles, and 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.

In September 2004, General Richard Cody, the US Army Vice Chief of Staff, stated that some 500-600 IEDs were then going off each month, and roughly half either harmed US personnel or damaged US vehicles.²⁶ While Coalition forces claimed 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.

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 uparmored Humvees were unsafe in high threat areas, and were being replaced with heavily armored 5-ton “gun trucks.”²⁷ An analysis by the Iraq Coalition Casualty Count showed that IEDs had killed 336 Americans by various suicide or car bombs, as of April 29, 2005.²⁸

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 uparmored Humvees in US forces rose from around 200 in the summer of 2004 to 9,000 in June 2005.²⁹

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, 2005.³⁰ 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.

Use mixed attacks, and seek to ambush 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, 2005.³¹ 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 Iraq forces, although scarcely defeated them.

Carry out sequential ambushes: Increasingly carry out complex mixes of sequential ambushes to draw in and attack Iraqi and US responders to the initial or previous follow-on attacks.

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 highlight and train 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 uparmor and uparm everything from truck and Humvees to armored fighting vehicles like the Stryker. At the same time, insurgents learned how to emplace 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: 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 manportable surface to air missiles (MANPADS).³² 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.

“Swarming” techniques, and 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.

Suicide bombs, car bombs, and mass bombings: The use of such tactics increased steadily after 1999, 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.³³

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 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 can 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.

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.

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, the difference between suicide attack and other attack was minimal. Iraqis were sent out to conduct 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.

Make better use of light weapons like automatic weapons, RPGs, and mortars; attack from remote locations or use timed devices: 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.

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, they 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-armor 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.³⁴

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 Baiji, where oil accumulates before it is pumped further north to Ceyhan, 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.

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. These “networks” clearly included drawing on the lessons learned by groups like Hezbollah, while Al Qa’ida and the Taliban picked up techniques from Iraq that they used during the fighting in Afghanistan.

As time went on, more and more organizations created small, largely independent methods of organization themselves dependent on informal networking. Rather than a hierarchical structure, leaders might stand largely aside from any links to the groups conducting actual operations – sometimes remaining in countries like Syria. The leadership would then effectively franchise groups that were filled with more experience cadres and which generally operated on their own with limited guidance, and episodic financing. They might include an operational leader and planner, technical “experts,” and financiers. Most would be closed, small groups that were difficult to detect and penetrate with minimal ties to their superiors and minimal contacts to the cells under them.

The cells under these groups would be equally small, and largely independent. Experience personnel could be limited to a leader, someone with technical expertise in the preferred mode of attack, and someone controlling finances. As noted above, those actually conducting an attack might be foreign volunteers, part-time Iraqis, or hired Iraqis. The actual fighters might not fully understand the structure of the cell, much less anything at higher levels.

Smuggling, drug sales, theft and looting, and direct fund transfers largely bypassed 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.

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.

Trying to 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 combine well with 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.

Denying the Coalition and Iraqi government local victory: The other side of the coin was that the insurgents found they could disperse and reinfiltate 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.

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.³⁵ The Vietnamese used the same tactic in Cambodia and Laos, and so have many other insurgent forces. The idea of securing a nation based on securing the territory within its tactical 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 poor capability to measure and characterize infantry and insurgent numbers, wounded, and casualties. They exploit these weaknesses in dispersal, in conducting attacks, in concealing the extent of losses, and in 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: There is no question that 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 netcentric 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.

Increase the size and power of IEDs to nullify the advantages of US and Coalition armor: 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.

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; screen recruits more carefully, find ways to communicate through the Internet that the US cannot target, disperse better, and improve their hierarchy and cell structure.

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's case, 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 on US, Iraqi government, aid, and every other aspect of Iraqi 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.*

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.

Iraqi-US Asymmetric Interaction and Non-Interoperability

The US not only initially failed to properly assess the growth of terrorism and insurgency during the first year following the fall of Saddam Hussein, but the insurgency also rose and became steadily more effective and it failed to react by treating the Iraqi forces it was creating as serious partners. It failed to promptly restructure its force goals, and training and equipment effort, for Iraq military, security, and police forces.

The end result was a growing asymmetry in interoperability between US military forces, and the new Iraqi forces, as the insurgency took hold. As the data in the following chapters make brutally clear, 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 in US forces. It is clear from the Congressional and media reaction to the discovery that the US was slow to uparmor the Humvees and trucks for its ground forces in December 2004. 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.

III. The Evolving Nature of the Insurgency

The development of Iraqi forces is only one side of the story. If Iraqi forces are to be successful, they must deal with the fact that the insurgent and terrorist threat in Iraq remains all too real and continues to evolve in response to the changes in Iraqi and Coalition forces. On the first anniversary of the transfer of power from the CPA back to an Iraqi government (June 26, 2005), the US had suffered 1,734 killed, of which 1,337 had been killed in hostile action, and well over 12,000 Americans had been wounded. A total of 885 Americans had been killed since the transfer of power.

Coalition allies had lost 187 lives, 74 since the transfer of power. There were no accurate estimates of Iraqi casualties, but the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior estimated that some 12,000 Iraqi civilians had been killed between March 20, 2003 and June 2, 2005. Iraqi forces had lost over 1,000 killed, and outside estimates of Iraqi casualties were much higher. One reputable organization put Iraqi casualties for the entire period since the invasion at 22,000-26,000, and only 7,350 of these were estimated to have occurred before Saddam Hussein was driven from power.³⁶ Total Coalition and Iraqi casualties, including civilians, approached 1,000 a month in June 2005.³⁷

The insurgency does not have a single face. Iraq faces a wide mix of active and potential threats, and the task that Iraqi military, security, and police forces face is anything but easy. It is still far from clear whether a combination of the Coalition and Iraqi government forces will be able to decisively defeat the various insurgent groups, and as the insurgency has developed, there have been growing Sunni Islamist efforts to provoke something approaching civil war.

An Unstable Mix of Threats

Iraq's forces must deal with a complex mix of threats – only some of which have as yet come into play. The Sunni elements of the insurgency 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.

Tribal and clan elements play a role at the local level, creating additional patterns of loyalty that cut across ideology or political goals. 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.

Insurgent and terrorist groups often cooperate, 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 are willing to consider negotiating with the new government, while Islamist extremist groups are not. This had led to threats and some violence between various Sunni factions.³⁸ While not

common, there have been growing reports of Iraqi Sunni executions of foreign Sunni Islamic extremists since November 2004.³⁹

At the same time, there is the constant threat 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 since the elections, and 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 very success of the January 30th elections has changed the strategy and tactics of such religious extremists, and it is clear they will do everything possible to block the drafting of a constitution, Iraqi Sunnis from entering the government, and the elections scheduled for the end of 2005.

In addition to the risk of ethnic and sectarian warfare, there is the risk of factional fighting within the Shi'ites, and between Iraq's Arabs and Kurds. Serious divisions exist between the more secular and more religious Shi'ites over how religious a new Iraqi state should be, and within Shi'ite religious factions. Figures like the Muqtada Sadr raise the risk of renewed Shi'ite insurgent movements, and tensions between Arab and Kurd have long been near the flashpoint in Kirkuk and present serious problems in Mosul.

Iraq's neighbors have conflicting interests and play a role in the insurgency. Syria has supported and tolerated Sunni Islamist infiltrations, and has allowed ex-Ba'athists to operate from Syria. Turkey is primarily interested in ensuring the Iraq's Kurds do not become an example to Turkey's Kurdish dissidents. Iran has its own interests in supporting Iraq's Islamic Shi'ites, creating an ally, and ending American "encirclement." The Arab states of the Gulf and Middle East do not want a Shi'ite dominated Iraq, and fear a Shi'ite "crescent" of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Iran.

The Uncertain Cycles and Patterns in the Insurgency

Complex insurgencies involve patterns that can play out over years and sometimes decades. It is easy to claim trends towards "victory," but it is generally far more difficult to make them valid or real.

For example, the Iraqi Interim Government claimed in early 2005 that some 16 of Iraq's 18 provinces were secure which was clearly untrue. There was a significant level of security in 10 to 12 provinces, and the US and IIG had won significant victories in Najaf and Fallujah in 2004, but the insurgency was clearly not defeated or incapable of attacks in supposedly safe Shi'ite and Kurdish areas.

Similarly, coalition and Iraqi success in preventing insurgent attacks on polling places during the January 30 election did not mean that there were not several hundred attempted attacks and actual attacks before the election, or prevent a new round of attacks and acts of terrorism after the election. The US lost 24 men and 60 were wounded in one attack on a mess tent in Mosul on December 21, 2004.⁴⁰ Some 68 Iraqis were killed in attacks in Karbala and Najaf a few days earlier, and some 175 wounded.⁴¹

Vice Admiral Lowell E. Jacoby, the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, summarized the state of the insurgency as follows in February 2005:⁴²

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% 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), comprise 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 Muqtada 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 fraction 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.

Insurgent groups will continue to use violence to attempt to protect Sunni Arab interests and regain dominance. 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. Keys to success 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.

Uncertain Claims the Insurgency is Losing Ground

Jacoby's statement provided an excellent overview at the time it was made, but did not anticipate the level of Sunni Islamic extremism that was to follow, and a shift in targeting by Sunni Islamic extremists to attack Iraqi targets in an attempt to provoke a civil war. Several senior US officers went even further and claimed that the insurgency was losing ground after the election. Lt. General John F. Sattler, the head of the USMC Expeditionary Force claimed 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 2000.

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 can mount only around 50 to 60 attacks on any given day.

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."⁴³ The US Chief of Staff, General Richard B. Myers claimed 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 2004.⁴⁴ The Iraqi interim Minister of the Interior, Falah al-Naqib, also made such claims. So did Lt. General Sir John Kiszely, then the British Commander in Iraq.⁴⁵

As is the case with many other types of official US reporting on Iraq, however, such claims were not supported with the detail and transparency necessary to establish their credibility. The US ceased to provide detailed unclassified data on the types of insurgent attacks or their locations in the summer of 2004. The private organizations that try to do this produce interesting results, but results that are often suspect. What US official sources did say is that that prior to the Iraqi election:⁴⁶

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 shortly 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 do occur cause no casualties or property damage.

Uncertain Trends in the Numbers

Such estimates reflect problems that have been typical of the US and British official reporting on the insurgency and which make it difficult to analyze its intensity and predict trends. The counts quoted by senior US officials focused on attacks directed at US and Iraqi government targets rather than all attacks, and did not include all attempts and minor incidents. They also did not include Iraqi criminal activity, or sabotage; and the Iraqi Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior had stopped all meaningful reporting in these areas in the summer of 2004.

Unclassified work by DIA and MNF-I showing the approximate number of total attacks per month from May 2003 to March 2004 is summarized in Figure 33. These data reflected patterns typical of the cyclical variations in modern insurgencies.⁴⁷ The same is true of the trend data on US casualties shown in Figure 34, and it is clear from a comparison of the data in these two figures that the patterns in the insurgency are highly cyclical, and 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.

Certainly US casualty rates did not alter in any predictable way. As of August 4 2005, Department of Defense figures indicated that 1810 Americans had died in Iraq. A total of 483 died in 2004 after the fall of Saddam's regime; 847 in 2005, and 480 as of this date in 2005. 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, 2005.⁴⁸ Other reporting gave strong indications that insurgent activity had surged before the elections and then temporarily eased back, rather than diminished in any lasting way. An internal US Army analysis in April calculated that the apparent shift was more a shift in focus to more vulnerable non-US targets than an actual drop in incidents.⁴⁹ 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.⁵⁰

The DIA figures, and Coalition casualty data, were skewed in favor of counts of attacks on Coalition forces and undercounted 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 never publicly attempted to count Iraqi casualties of any kind, or treat Iraqi military and police casualties as partners whose sacrifice deserves recognition.

The MNF and MNSTC-I do report that they keep track of Iraqi casualties, and cited a total of 2,000 Iraqi police casualties in reporting in June 2000, but generally do not disclose such numbers. 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."⁵¹

Such Coalition counts also have undercounted major acts of sabotage. Like most such partial counts, this disguised important shifts in the patterns in insurgency. As the chronology in the appendix to this analysis shows, insurgents also shifted from US and Coalition to Iraqi government, Kurdish, and Shi'ite targets, and the major incidents came to include a far more bloody series of suicide bombings.

As a result, it is not surprising that there was a major resurgence in insurgent and terrorist activity in the months that followed, and as a new Iraqi government finally completed its

selection process in late April and early May 2005. 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.⁵² In contrast, the MNF-I reported that "more than 2,000" Iraqi security forces personnel had been killed by the end of July 2005.⁵³

The Iraqi government has been reluctant to release 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, 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, 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.⁵⁴

The number of car bombings rose from 65 in February 2005 to 135 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.⁵⁵ 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 5,536.⁵⁶

While the insurgents focused more on Iraqi targets, 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.⁵⁷ 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.⁵⁸

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 than 60 people in the Kurdish city of Irbil in Northern Iraq in a single attack.⁵⁹ For the first time, in April, more than 50% of the car bombings were suicide attacks.⁶⁰

During the same period, 80 more bodies had been found floating in the Tigris, and 19 more were discovered in a soccer stadium.⁶¹ The total number of US killed now totaled 1,593 (1,216 killed in hostile action), and 12,243 wounded. Some 180 allied military had been killed, and 86 US civilians, and unofficial estimates put the number of Iraqi dead at least 21,450-24,325.⁶²

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.⁶³ These operations had to be followed up again and again, largely because many of the insurgents could disperse the moment they came under pressure, and 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.

As of the early summer of 2005, 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. 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 2005. Daily attacks had averaged 30-40 a day in February, but were at least 70 a day in June.⁶⁴

Additionally, insurgents continued attacks designed to disrupt supplies of water, electricity, crude oil, gasoline and heating oil, particularly to Baghdad. This shift in attack patterns indicated that insurgents were carrying out a sophisticated plan to sabotage government services, hoping to convince residents that the government cannot provide for its people. 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.⁶⁵

In June 2005, the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior released new figures on Iraqi civilian and security force casualties. 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.⁶⁶ 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.⁶⁷ Yet, reliance on hospitals and morgues alone to count deaths provides a low figure for approximate deaths. Certainly, not every dead body is taken to the hospital or morgue and certain groups of Iraqis probably avoid the hospitals altogether. The Ministry of the Interior took over responsibility of counting the number of Iraqis killed in the summer of 2004. The Health Ministry did provide a breakdown of Iraqi deaths by province from early November 2004 until early April 2005, but this count relied on its traditional method of gathering data from morgues and hospitals.

The ministry noted that during this period:⁶⁸

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.

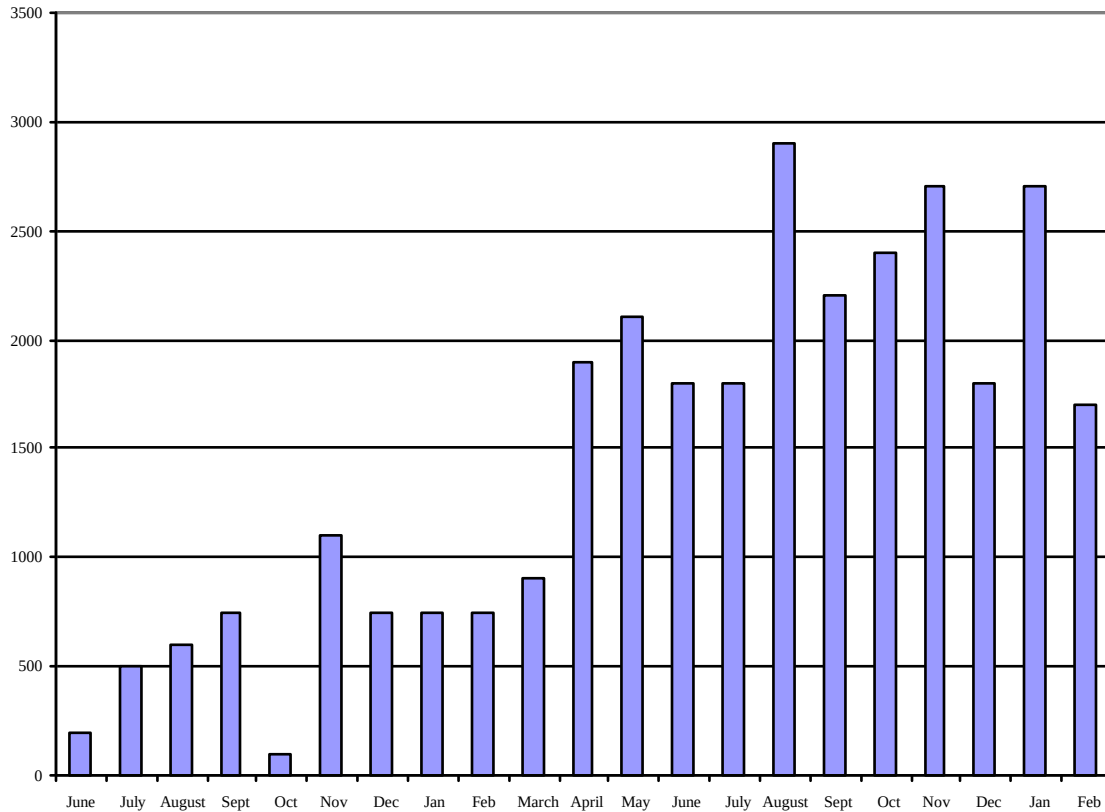
The ministry recorded 15,517 wounded, of which men made up 91%.

Iraqi Interior Minister Bayan Jabr stated in June 2005 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.

A group called the Iraq Body Count in conjunction with the Oxford Research Group released a study of Iraqi casualties since the Coalition invasion. 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. These figures may be as good an estimate as is now possible, but 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.⁶⁹

Senior US officers like General Abizaid gave far more cautious briefings in May than officers had given in February, and talked about years of combat.⁷⁰ US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Richard Myers stated in late May that while the levels of insurgent attacks had decreased, their lethality had increased.⁷¹ The only good news was that there was no significant Shi'ite anti-Coalition or government insurgent activity since Sadr's militia ceased to actively try to occupy cities and shrines in the south after its defeat in the summer and fall of 2004 -- although Sadr had rebuilt at least part of his organization and did support anti-Coalition demonstrations after the January 2005 election.

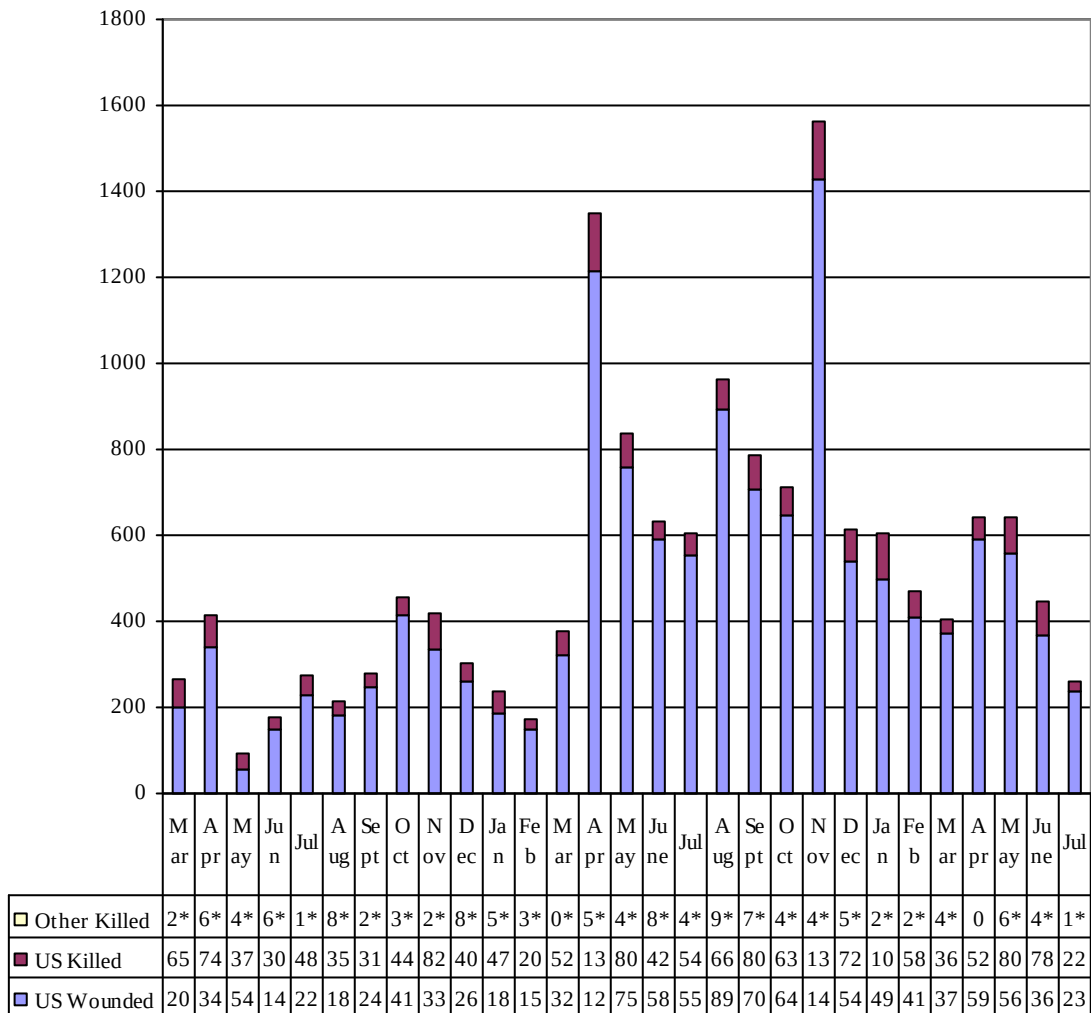
Figure 33
Approximate Number of Major Attacks Per Month: June 2003-February 2005



Note: Includes approximate number of attacks on Coalition, Iraqi security forces, Iraqi government officials, civilians, and infrastructure.

Source: Adapted from the DIA and MNF-I data presented in Joseph A. Christoff, *Rebuilding Iraq: Preliminary Observations on Challenges in Transferring Security Responsibilities to Iraqi Military and Police*, Government Accountability Office (GAO) GAO-05-43IT, March 14, 2005, p. 10.

Figure 34
Approximate Number of US Killed and Wounded: June 2003-July 2005



Note: Other Killed includes all other Coalition military forces but no civilians and no Iraqis.

Source: Adapted from data proved by the Department of Defense, www.defenselink.org, and the Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, <http://icasualties.org/oif/>, accessed July 18, 2005

The Limits to the Insurgency

The insurgency in Iraq has not been a national insurgency. Iraqi Kurds have never supported it, and only small numbers of Shi'ites have ever taken an active role. It has been driven by a relatively small part of Iraq's population concentrated in part of the country. Although there are no accurate census data, the Arab Sunni population only seems to be around 15-20% of Iraq's total population, and only 6-8% of Iraq's total population is located in the areas most hostile to the Coalition and the Iraqi government. Moreover, if one looks at the total population of all the scattered cities and areas where insurgents and terrorists largely dominate, it does not exceed 6-9% of Iraq's total population. Furthermore, the insurgency has not been dominated by foreign fighters. Brig. Gen. John Custer, director of intelligence for US CENTCOM, addressed the primacy of the foreign fighter myth in summer 2005. He stated, "When you take a look at who we have killed, who we have captured, who we have in detention, it is 95 percent, at least, Iraqi-Sunni-Arab, and if you look at the Zarqawi network you will find that it's vastly Iraqi."⁷²

General John Abizaid, commander of the US Central Command, said that the four provinces with particularly difficult security situations are western Baghdad, Al Anbar, Nineveh and Saahuddin.⁷³ Yet, even in these areas -- where insurgents operate and have significant local influence -- much of the population is divided and only limited areas are normally under active insurgent control.

Many Iraqis do passively support the insurgency -- and provide political support for attacks on Coalition forces. One Coalition private poll, conducted in February 2005, showed that as many as 45% of the Iraqi Arabs polled supported attacks on Coalition forces while only 15% strongly supported the Coalition. Out of those native Sunni Iraqis who supported the insurgency, however, most only provided sympathy or passive support. And -- as has been touched upon earlier -- there are clear signs that even Iraqi Sunnis who do support the insurrection sometimes actively oppose the actions of outside Islamist extremists and terrorists.

There have also been indicators that some formerly hostile Sunnis are moving towards participation in the government and the evolving Iraqi political process. The negotiations between anti-government Sunnis and Iraqi officials stepped up after the January 30, 2005 elections. While most Sunnis boycotted the elections, the elections were successful enough in legitimizing majority Shi'ite rule, and in including the Kurds, to show some Sunni continued opposition could simply end in isolation and a loss of wealth and power. As is discussed in more detail shortly, a total of 64 Sunni clerics signed a fatwa legitimizing Sunni participation in the Iraqi military, security forces, and police forces on April 8, 2005. Sunni sermons included similar themes, and effectively stated that violence against the Iraqi forces was wrong.⁷⁴

These security problems are compounded by the fact that NGOs, national and international aid organizations, and Iraqi and outside investors generally judge Iraq by its most threatened areas, not the 10-12 provinces that are relatively safe. It is also impossible to predict when new forms of ethnic and sectarian fighting may take place, and crime, corruption, and bureaucratic delays can paralyze legitimate activity while encouraging profiteering and exploitation. Governance is also often weak or ineffective at

the provincial and local levels. As a result, the flow of civil and economic aid and investment to even the most secure areas remains extremely low. This compounds the government's problems in establishing its legitimacy and security and attracting Sunnis in high threat areas.

The Continuing Threat

The Iraqi government and Coalition face at least several years of continuing threat. Insurgent attacks continue in Baghdad, Mosul, Karbala, and Najaf. The Sunni triangle, the area along the Tigris, and the "triangle of death" south of Baghdad all continue to be areas of intense Sunni insurgent activity, and the stability of Shi'ite and Kurdish areas remains uncertain.

Estimates of the Size of Threat Forces

Estimates of the number of insurgents have varied widely ever 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 everyone who issues such estimates admits they are little more than sophisticated "guesstimates."

A few outlying estimates have been as low as 3,500 full-time actives making up the "core" forces. 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 quotes US sources as putting the total of insurgents at 12,000-20,000 in late June 2005. Another US expert is 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.⁷⁵

The true figure may well fall somewhere in this range of different figures, but the exact number is also largely irrelevant. The real issue is whether the insurgency enjoys 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.

Political developments also affect the cycles and nature of the insurgency. Some experts believe the January 30, 2005 elections led some of the native Iraqi insurgents to be more willing to consider negotiating with the government and playing a role in the political process, while events inside and outside Iraq led Al Qa'ida and other Islamist extremist groups to see Iraq more and more as a center of their operations both because of the possibility of "defeating" the US and because it was one of the few theaters of operations that had significant public support in the Arab world.⁷⁶

Iraq faces two more elections during 2005: a constitutional referendum scheduled for October, and full national election for the end of the year. Insurgents will have every incentive to create as much political turmoil as possible, as well as continue their attacks on the Iraqi government, economy, intelligentsia, security forces, and the Coalition.

Comparisons of Threat and Iraqi Forces

There is no way to quantify how the development of Iraqi military, security, and police forces has kept pace with the development of effective Iraqi government 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.⁷⁷

In any case, numerical comparisons are largely pointless. The ratio of security forces to insurgents sometimes has to reach levels of 12:1 through 30:1 in order to provide security in a given area, if there is no political solution to the problems that create the insurgency or active presence by the government. In other cases, a small number of security forces can decapitate a movement or cell and end it. Intangibles like the battle for political perceptions and “hearts and minds” are often far more critical than the numbers of insurgents and defenders.

As Chapter III has shown, threat forces have evolved, as well as Iraqi military, security, and police forces. The insurgents and terrorists have grown in capability and size, although serious fighting in Fallujah, Mosul, and Samarra may have reduced their capabilities towards the end of the year. The insurgents have also 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. Insurgents deployed six suicide bombers with explosive belts in February 2005 alone, indicating that insurgents are learning ways to get around security restrictions that make car bombings more difficult.⁷⁸

The Meaning of Coalition Victories and Insurgent Defeats

Insurgents have 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.

Nevertheless, Iraqi government and US attempts to root out the insurgency have so far had limited impact. While some US officers have talked about 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.

No province has been 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, Bajii, 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.⁷⁹ 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.⁸⁰ 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.

The battles that have followed 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. While neither MNSTC-I nor the Iraqi government have provided counts of insurgent killed and wounded, the figures almost certainly exceed 10,000 between May 2003 and May 2005, and could be substantially higher.

The US Marine Corps launched its largest offensive in the Syrian border area and hostile areas along the main route from Syria to Iraq in April 2005. This “Operation Matador,” and a series of smaller follow-up attacks, again showed that the insurgents could not survive if they stood and fought but could always disperse and survive.⁸¹ 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.

In spite of such new offensives, Sunni insurgent groups remained active 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. As a result, four of Iraq’s provinces continued to have a major insurgency threat and a major insurgent presence. 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.⁸²

General Casey stated in March 2005 that insurgents operating from the Sunni areas had enough manpower, weaponry, ammunition, and money to launch between 50 and 60 attacks a day.⁸³ 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, the general maintained that the capture of certain leaders had degraded the insurgents’ abilities to fashion IEDs, the deadliest weapon confronting US troops.

US and Iraqi efforts to thwart individual insurgent attacks – while tireless – 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.

There has been continuing sabotage of key targets like Iraq’s oil facilities, and a constant campaign of intimidation, disappearances, and “mystery killings.” 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 1-26.⁸⁴

The Dominant Role of Iraqi Sunni Arab Insurgents

A violent split between the Arab Shi’ites and Kurds remains possible, as do splits within the major Shi’ite factions in the government. Barring such divisions, however, the

insurgency will remain largely Iraqi and Sunni dominated. 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.⁸⁵ Some may be little more than tribal or clan groupings, since many elements of the Sunni insurgency have strong tribal affiliations or cells. An overwhelming majority of those captured or killed have been Iraqi Sunnis, as well as something like 90-95% of those detained.

The Sunni insurgents are divided into a complex mix of Sunni nationalists, pro-Ba'ath/ex-regime, Sunni Iraqi Islamists, outside Islamic extremists, foreign volunteers with no clear alignment, and paid or politically motivated criminals. Some are organized so that their cadres are in relatively small cells, some as small as 2 or 3 men. These cells can recruit or call in larger teams, but the loss of even a significant number of such cells may not cripple a given group, and several Sunni groups operate in most areas. Others seem to operate as much larger, but normally dispersed groups, capable of coming together for operations of as many as 30-50 men.

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.

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 its border with Syria and the road to Syria, and insurgents take advantage of the largely 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.

It is scarcely surprising that it has become 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.⁸⁶

Sunni insurgents have also repeatedly shown since the battle of Fallujah that they can strike in ethnically mixed and Shi'ite-dominated cities like Baghdad, Mosul and Basra. The road from Baghdad to the international airport outside the city remains a high threat area, and has become a symbol of the Coalition and government's problems in bringing security to Iraq. Iraqis have come to call it "death street," and the Coalition "IED alley." The threat in Sunni neighborhoods like Amariya, Hamra, Jihad, and Qaddisiya is bad enough so that senior officials bypass it in helicopters, and regular convoys of armored buses called "Rhinos" have become the only relatively secure way to travel by land.⁸⁷

More broadly, insurgents continue to operate in the Kurdish and more secure Shi'ite areas. Islamist extremists use bombings and other large attacks to fuel a constant feeling of insecurity, and to try to divide Iraqis along ethnic and sectarian lines. No province is safe from occasional attack, and attacks are only part of the story. Sabotage, politically oriented crime, and intimidation are all important weapons in the insurgent arsenal.

Ba'athists, Ex-Regime Loyalists and/or "Sunni Nationalists"

Iraq's Arab Sunnis are only beginning to forge new political identities out of the power vacuum left by Saddam Hussein's dictatorship. It is important to note that while most of Iraq's ruling elite during Saddam Hussein's decades of dictatorship were 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.⁸⁸ 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.

Most Sunni Arabs, like most Shi'ite Arabs, favored a strong, unified Iraqi state during 2003-2004, when public opinion polls covering broad areas were still possible. Like Iraq's Arab Shi'ites, polls show that Iraqi Sunnis are generally religious and see Islam as a key aspect of their lives, but do not favor a theocratic state.

Sunni efforts to create a new political identity include the minority that has participated in the new government and political process, many who boycott it, and political parties like the Muslim Brotherhood and Iraq Islamic Party. They also include clerical bodies like the Association of Islamic Scholars, which is headed by Dr. Muthanna Harith al-Dhari – an Egyptian educated Islamic scholar. The Association of Islamic Scholars claims to represent some 6,000 mosques, or 80% of the total. There is no way to validate such claims.⁸⁹

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.⁹⁰ It became clear, however, that al-Samarri had a questionable past and a controversial tenure as electricity minister. Furthermore, it could not be substantiated that al-Samarri had had any contact with any insurgents as he claimed. Not long after he claimed this ability to speak on behalf of the insurgents, militant groups criticized him via the Web. They asserted that he did not speak for them and that he was 'spreading lies.'

A week later, an Internet statement appeared stating that the Army of the Mujahideen 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.⁹¹

The furor over who did and did not speak for the various groups within the insurgency led analysts to suggest that perhaps some of the militants were moving to form political wings.⁹² It remained unclear whether such wings would seek to formally run in the elections or whether they would seek to simply put forward cogent demands and expectations.

Ba'athists, Non-Ba'athists, or Semi-Ba'athists?

US analysts -- like those in the CIA -- acknowledge that Ba'athist and ex-regime loyalists represent only a part of the insurgency -- although they have played a key role in leadership, organization, and financing. The largest elements of the insurgency appear to be newly radicalized Iraqi Sunnis.

According to the CIA reports, the Sunni loss of power, prestige, and economic influence is a key 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 U.S. occupation -- particularly those who have lost a loved one fighting U.S. forces -- and the political and economic turmoil that accompanied the occupation.⁹³

This does not mean that ex-Ba'athists do not play a critical 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.⁹⁴ At the same time, many full-time and part-time Iraqi members groups associated with the Ba'ath are linked more by tribe, family, and locality than any sense of Ba'ath political identity.

Many of the Sunni insurgent groups or cells that are not Islamist extremist groups, or associated with them, may get money or some degree of leadership from the Ba'athist structures that have emerged since the fall of Saddam Hussein, but have no meaningful ties to or family linkage to former Ba'ath groups or to former members of Saddam and the Ba'ath regime. 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.

Other Iraqi-dominated Sunni insurgent groups have a significant degree of independence from the former Ba'ath leadership, although it is clear that many cooperate in at least some operations, and that many of the elements with at least some ties to ex-supporters of Saddam's regime have some degree of central leadership and coordination. US experts talk of informal networks, using tools like the Internet, to 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.

In short, it is unclear how much influence various "Ba'athist" groups have. However, both US and Iraqi Interim Government officials -- such as the MNF commander General Casey and Iraqi Defense Minister Hazan Shaalan -- believe that Ba'ath leaders in Syria coordinate with at least some of the Ba'ath sympathizers. The office of the Iraqi Prime Minister also called for the arrest of six senior members of the former regime in March 2005.⁹⁵

Izzat Ibrahim al-Dur: Believed to be the leader of the New Regional Command and New Ba'ath Party.

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 financier 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.

Ba'athist elements benefit from the fact that they still have access to some of the former regime's money and they began to organize – at least a crude level – before the invasion began, and 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.

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 5th Corps are still in Mosul, and Syria has provided a covert sanctuary for at least some Iraq Ba'athist leaders.⁹⁶

The relations between such mainstream Iraq Sunni insurgent groups and the smaller Islamic extremist groups are mixed. 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.⁹⁷ 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.

Guesstimates and the "Numbers Game"

As has already been discussed, there are no reliable estimates of the numbers of the various types of Sunni insurgents, or breakdowns of their strength by motivation and group. There also are no recent polls that provide a clear picture of how many Iraqi Arab Sunnis support the insurgents, although some ABC polls indicated that the number was well over 33% by the spring of 2004. Many members of the Sunni clergy have become steadily more supportive of the insurgency since that time, and battles like Fallujah have inevitably helped to polarize Sunni opinion.

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 2005.⁹⁸

US and Iraqi official experts would be the first to indicate that any such numbers were little more than guesstimates. They have 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.

Once again, the numerical strength of the insurgents is only part of the issue. Insurgent cadres have also steadily become more experienced, adapting tactics and methods of attack as fast as Coalition can counter them. Coalition troops reported that insurgents in Fallujah utilized an improved RPG in efforts to counter armored vehicles. The fighting in September-November of 2004 has shown they are developing networks with some form of central command, planning, and financing.

The Crime Problem

At least some elements in the Sunni insurgency 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.

The 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 popular 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 Intelligence and Security Problem

“Ba’athists” and “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.

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.

US, allied, and Iraqi human intelligence is improving but Coalition efforts are badly hurt by high turnover and rotations. Most Iraqi networks serving the US in hostile areas have serious 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 in the last six months, and Iraqi units do seem to be able to get better input from the local population, but the training and organization of effective Iraqi intelligence and counter intelligence efforts will take at least until the end of 2005 and probably well into 2006.

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 inevitably filled with soft or vulnerable targets that insurgents can choose at will, and experienced insurgents and terrorists will always target these vulnerabilities.

Inclusion versus Exclusion

In theory, the various Sunni insurgent groups are more capable of paralyzing progress, and fighting a long war of attrition, than of actually 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."

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."⁹⁹

At the same time, the various Sunni insurgent elements are becoming better trained and organized, and may be 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.¹⁰⁰ They can 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.*

Yet, an understanding of these same political and military realities may eventually drive many Sunni insurgents to join into 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 are likely to be slow and limited in scope. 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.

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. Iraq's president and prime minister have both done this. The search for a Sunni Minister of Defense examined some 10 candidates before choosing Sadoon al-Dulaimi in early May 2003, and was a key factor delaying the creation of a new government. At the same time, other Shi'ites and Kurds have called for the systematic purging of all Sunnis with ties to the Ba'ath, including many in the Iraqi forces, and unexplained raids have taken place on Sunni political groups involved in trying to negotiate with the government.¹⁰¹

Islamist Groups and Outside Volunteers

Other key insurgent elements include Arab and Islamist groups with significant numbers of foreign volunteers, as well as Iraqi Islamist extremists. These include groups like the one led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, first known as *al-Tawhid wal-Jihad*, or Unity and Holy War, now known as *Tandhim Qa'idat al-Jihan fi Bilad al-Rafidayn*, or al-Qa'ida of Jihad Organization in the Land of Two Rivers.¹⁰²

The other easily identifiable group 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 allegedly several settled in Mosul. Other groups and their area of operation include:¹⁰³

Al-Muqawama al-'Iraqiya al-Wataniya al-Islamiya—Fayaliq Thawrat 1920 or the Iraqi National Islamic Resistance—the 1920 Brigades: West Baghdad, Ninewa, Diyala, and Anbar.

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.

There seem to be 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. 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.

It is unlikely that such groups make up more than 10% of the insurgent force, and may make up around 5%. While the number of foreign volunteers has increased with time, it is also important to point out that as of June 2005, they made up less than 600 of some

14,000 detainees. Coalition experts also estimated that they had made up less than 5% of insurgent casualties and detainees to date.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, they may be the most dangerous element in the insurgency since they have increasingly tried to provoke a civil war between Iraq's Arab Sunnis and its Arab Shi'ites, Kurds, and other minorities.

Foreign Sunni Islamist extremist volunteers *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.¹⁰⁵ These attacks also 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.¹⁰⁶

What is not clear is the extent to which the fact young men are recruited from countries in North Africa, the Sudan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and other countries means that Islamist extremist organizations are dominated by foreign fighters. Recruiting outsiders as cannon fodder or "martyrs" has become all too easy in a region where religious extremists have learned how to exploit religious feelings; it does not mean that those directing the effort and carry out the support activity are not Iraqis, or that such movements and activities do not have substantial Iraqi support.

The US State Department Assessment of Zarqawi

The US State Department Country Reports on Terrorism, described the overall level of such terrorist activity in Iraq at the end of 2004, and the role of key Islamist groups, as follows:¹⁰⁷

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 actions. Approximately 3,800 disarmed persons remained resident at the former Mujahideen-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):¹⁰⁸

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.

Zarqawi Operations in 2005

Views have differed sharply over the size of Zarqawi's movement, 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 and how independent they are of Zarqawi and Al Qa'ida. A number of groups claim affiliation with Zarqawi, 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.

At the same time, forces with ties to Zarqawi have been capable of large offensive operations like the spring 2005 attack on Abu Ghraib prison, and many of the insurgent forces the US Marine Corps fought in its offensive along the Euphrates and near the Syrian border in May 2005 either had ties to Zarqawi or were part of mixes of Zarqawi loyalists and other Iraqi Sunni insurgents.

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. However, some MNSTC-I and Iraqi experts felt that so many volunteers were coming in across the Syrian and other borders that the total was rapidly increasing.¹⁰⁹ A few press estimates went as high as 10,000 before the fighting in Fallujah, but seemed to be sharply exaggerated. It seems more likely that Zarqawi's movement now consists of a series of cells, with a limited central organization. They probably total 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.

Zarqawi does seem to have been able to recruit more and more outside 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. It is not clear whether this is sharply strengthening his movement, or simply helped to cope with the constant attrition caused by MNF-I and Iraqi attacks. The problem of infiltration, however, was serious enough to 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 2005.¹¹⁰

While US claims about the importance of the killings and captures of Zarqawi's senior lieutenants have sometimes seemed exaggerated – as do claims to have nearly killed or captured Zarqawi – there were real successes. 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.¹¹¹ 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 Pakistan's and Bahrain's envoys. An Internet posting purportedly written by Zarqawi's group claimed 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.¹¹²

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 was 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.

Zarqawi and Suicide Bombings and Volunteers

The importance of such Islamist extremist elements is not determined by their numbers. They tend to conduct the bloodiest attacks, do most to try to divide Iraq along ethnic and sectarian lines, and create a series of high profile bombings and atrocities that captures media and public attention both inside and outside Iraq. For example, some 400 people were killed in suicide bombings in Iraq during the first two weeks of May 2005, many in

bombings by Sunni extremist groups clearly targeting Shi'ites and Kurds, and doing so during a key period of transition to the new government elected on January 30th.¹¹³

Most of the suicide bombers in Iraq seem to have been foreign jihadists recruited by Islamic extremist movements and Islamists in other countries, and sent to Iraq with the goal of seeking "Islamic" martyrdom. Islamist extremist web sites have become filled with the claimed biographies of such martyrs.¹¹⁴ Experts differ over just how many such suicide bombers exist and where they come from. Reuven Paz calculated in March 2005 that some 200 suicide bombers could be documented and that 154 had been killed in the previous six months. He estimated that 61% were Saudi, and 25% were Iraqi, Kuwaiti, and Syrian. Nawaf Obaid found 47 Saudi suicide bombers in Saudi media records in May 2005, and estimated the total number of Saudi insurgents as in the hundreds. Evan F. Kohlmann found 235 suicide bombers named on web sites since the summer of 2005, and estimated that more than 50% were Saudi.¹¹⁵

Whatever the numbers of such recruits may be, Saudi officials and counterterrorist experts are deeply concerned about the fact that some clerics and Islamic organizations recruit young Saudis for Islamist extremist organizations, and infiltrate them through countries like Syria into Iraq. Such efforts are scattered and individual, rather than tied to movements like Al Qa'ida in visible ways, and can bypass the Saudi counterterrorist structure, which is focused on internal security. They do, however, end up using young Saudis as tools in suicide bombings, have involved infiltrations across the Saudi border, and present the problem of a whole new generation of young Saudis being trained as Islamic extremists and Jihadists outside the country. The problem is also scarcely unique to Saudi Arabia, and presents the same problem to other Sunni Islamic countries.

Interviews with top US and Iraqi officials and commanders in June 2005 indicated that such jihadists actually came from many countries including other Gulf countries, North Africa, Syria, the Sudan, and Central Asia. Such Iraqis singled out Syria as the major problem. None singled out Saudi Arabia or Iran.

Many lower level Islamist/extremist volunteers are not trained or skilled fighters. They come from a wide range of countries, often with little or no training, and the overwhelming majority has only a limited history of affiliation with any organized Islamist or extremist group.¹¹⁶ The actual movements, however, do have a large percentage of Iraqi and foreign fighters that are considerably better organized, well armed, and capable of effective ambushes and attacks. These more experienced jihadists have shown they can fight hard, and are sometimes willing to stand and die in ways that force MNF-I and Iraqi troops into intense firefights and clashes.

Zarqawi and "Weapons of Mass Media"

Zarqawi's movement has been extremely effective at striking at targets with high media and political impact, particularly in the form of suicide bombings and beheadings.¹¹⁷ In the summer of 2005, 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.¹¹⁸

Soon afterwards, Pakistani Ambassador Mohammed Younis Khan and Bahraini charges d'affaires Hassan Malallah Ansari were targeted by Zarqawi's group. 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.

Although some of Zarqawi's deputies have been apprehended and the Syrians delivered up Saddam Hussein's brother-in-law, much of the group's leadership has survived US and Iraqi assaults. US officials believe the insurgent leadership is 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.¹¹⁹

Ironically, jihadist websites often list complaints detailing a lack of press coverage for some of their attacks.¹²⁰ The militant groups have largely been viewed as very successful manipulators of Arab and Western media outlets, able to tailor their attacks for maximum media coverage and psychological effect. The proliferation of groups could be an indication that there has developed competition for press coverage, media exhaustion, or of a reduced capacity of the insurgents to launch attacks that grab headlines.

Zarqawi's Al Qa'ida in Mesopotamia group started an online Internet magazine entitled *Zurwat al Sanam*, in an effort to wage a more effective propaganda and recruiting campaign. This effort has been mirrored by other insurgent groups on the Web, 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.¹²¹

A group allied to Zarqawi issued a statement on the Internet in May 2005 claiming that he had been injured during an exchange with Iraqi troops. The group affirmed that he was alive and well, but the information could not be independently verified.

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.

Zarqawi Ties to Bin Laden and Outside Sunni Islamist Groups

The Zarqawi group has strengthened its ties to outside terrorist groups. In October 2004, 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.¹²² 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.

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 Zarqawi and possibly Al Qa'ida. They seem to be largely Iraqi, but their mix of Sunnis and Kurds is uncertain, as is the extent to which the group and its cells are at least partly a legacy of Ansar al-Islam – an active Islamist group that reportedly provided sanctuary for Zarqawi before the war. In November 2004, Ansar al-Sunna claimed 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.¹²³ 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.¹²⁴

Another "Zarqawi letter," written on April 27, 2005 by one of his associates (Abu Asim al Qusayami al Yemeni), seemed to reflect Zarqawi's complaints about the failure of some of his volunteers to martyr themselves, typical of the kind of complaints and calls for more support that he has used both to try to lever more support from Bin Laden and gain more support from Arabs outside Iraq.¹²⁵

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 unsure of whether to offer their support to the elected government.

Zarqawi appears to have made some efforts to remake his organization's reputation to reduce tensions with Iraqi Sunnis, and possibly Iraqi Shi'ites as well. The website pronouncements claimed 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 2005.¹²⁶ Zarqawi has, however, advocated attacks on Shi'ites and said he views 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. It is now unclear that any Shi'ite element, including many of Sadr's supporters, are willing to cooperate with such Sunni extremist groups.

A tape attributed to Zarqawi in May 2005, was anything but less reticent.¹²⁷ 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 claimed 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, Riyadh, Nairobi, Tanzania, and if these were considered illegitimate then it would mean stopping jihad in every place.

He said that Iraq's geography made through direct combat with the enemy difficult, and the only way was to intensify combat was suicide operations. He compared Iraq to

Afghanistan with its mountains, and to Chechnya where there were woods, and said it was easier for the "mujaheddin" to have a safe place to hide and plan after fighting with the enemy. He stated that it was difficult for the "mujaheddin" to move in Iraq because of the checkpoints and the US bases, therefore suicide operations are easy to carry out and to 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?"

He heavily attacked Iraq's Shi'ites and Shiites in general. He said his group never attacked other sects in Iraq who are not considered Muslims, but fought the Shiites because they assist the enemy and are traitors. According to Zarqawi, the Shiites pretend they care about civilian casualties...he mentioned operations carried out by Failaq Badr (with dates, locations, numbers of people killed) during the 1980s and 1990s. He also claimed there was a plan to eliminate the Sunnis in Iraq, and that Sunni mosques were being handed over to Shiites and that Sunni clerics, teachers, doctors and experts were being killed. He claimed that Sunni women were being kidnapped and that Shiite police participated in raping women at Abu Ghraib.

He claimed there were problems at Iraqi government-run prisons in Iraq, including one in Qut which he said was being run by Iranian intelligence and a prison in Hilla run by a Shiite major general called Qays, who "cuts Muslims' bodies and rapes women." He mentions a specific story where Qays threatened to rape the wife of one of the fighters (evidently Major General Qays Hamza, chief of al Hillah police). He says his fighters tried to kill Qays but he survived (There was a web statement dated March 30th about a suicide bombing in Hilla that targeted Major General Qays).¹²⁸

Another tape -- attributed to Zarqawi -- aired on July 6, 2005. In the tape, Zarqawi reaffirms that targeting Iraqis is legitimate and he dubs the Iraqi security forces apostates. He calls on Iraqi clerics who disapprove of targeting Iraqis to reconsider their views.

The Jordanian asserts 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 declares 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 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.

Zarqawi also asserts that many Iraqi females have come to him asking to be dispatched on suicide missions. He uses this to try and shame Iraqi males into seeking suicide missions and to try and convince their wives and girlfriends to shame them into such missions.¹²⁹

Zarqawi has long been identified with the militant Islamist preacher Isam Mohammed al-Barqawi, or Abu Mohammed al-Maqdisi, with whom Zarqawi shared a cellblock in a Jordanian prison in the mid 1990s. Zarqawi has referred to al-Barqawi as his 'sheik,' and the preacher is considered the terrorist's, as well as many other militants', spiritual

guide.¹³⁰ A statement posted on an Islamist website in summer 2005, allegedly written by Zarqawi, revealed a strained relationship between the two extremists.

Al-Barqawi was interviewed on Al Jazeera satellite television saying that the suicide bombings in Iraq had killed too many Iraqis and that the militants should not target Shi'ite Muslims. Zarqawi's statement addressed the interview, questioning al-Barqawi's statements and imploring the preacher to not 'turn against the Mujahideen.'¹³¹ If authentic, the posting seems likely to confirm what Zarqawi's letter to Bin Laden suggested: that the font of support Zarqawi expected to come forth in Iraq and the Middle East has yet to materialize on the scale he envisioned.

Zarqawi and Syria

Experts differ in opinion as to how much of Zarqawi's operations have taken place in Syria and with Syrian tolerance. There are reports that Zarqawi and top lieutenants met in Syria in the spring of 2005, but these have not been 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 Syrian, 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.¹³²

Sunni Iraqi Nationalist versus Sunni Islamic Extremist, or De Facto Cooperation?

Opinions differ sharply as to whether the different Sunni elements that make up the insurgency are dividing or coalescing. Many analysts suggest that Ba'athists and their former adversaries, such as the Salafists and the Kurds, are finding a common cause with foreign fighters.¹³³ Yet, there are also reports of fighting between the more secular native Sunni insurgents and Sunni Islamic extremists and some executions of such extremists by the more secular groups. The level of communication and cooperation between the various movements remains unclear.

The inability to characterize many Islamist movements--and the fact that successful suicide bombings and other attacks can have a major political and media impact even if they serve little clear military purpose--illustrates the fact that outside threats must be measured in terms of effectiveness and not numbers. In practice, the insurgents can choose the place and time of the attack, focus on targets with key political and media impact, and have an effect even if they fail to achieve the purpose of their attack but create visible explosions or kill innocent civilians.

In contrast, 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.

Like the Iraqi Sunni Arab insurgents, outside groups have improved their ability to take advantage of the fact that media coverage of the fighting, particularly by Arab satellite television, provides a real time picture of what tactics and weapons work, what strikes have most media and political impact, and often what targets are vulnerable. This "Al Jazeera Effect" substitutes for many elements of a C⁴I system. At the same time, confronting this confusing array of threats is made more difficult without general Iraqi loyalty and stand-alone Iraqi forces.

These groups pose a special threat because they have no clear boundaries that limit them to Iraq, and so few restraints and limits on the kinds of violence they use. In their eyes, Iraq is a theater of operation for far broader causes. Their core beliefs are based a vision of Sunni Islam that rejects Shi'ites and even rejects Sunnis that dissent from the extremists.

So far, such groups have generally been careful to avoid any open claims to a split with Iraqis Shi'ites, and some cooperated with Sadr and his militia. They have, however, 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. 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 helps explain why Sunni insurgent movements, and particularly Islamist extremists, made Iraq's political process a primary target before and after the January 30, 2005 elections. 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."¹³⁴ 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."¹³⁵

Another disturbing aspect of this extremism is that it increasingly accuses the US of "dehumanizing" Muslims, Arabs, and Iraqis by its invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq and actions in the war on terrorism. It cites episodes like the very real American abuses of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib, and US strategic writing on the use of precision weapons and the use of specialized nuclear weapons like "bunker busters." The corollary of this argument is that Islamic extremists are justified, in turn, in "dehumanizing" Americans and all of their allies, and using tactics such as high casualty attacks like suicide bombings and the use of chemical and biological weapons. This again ignores all of the core teaching of Islam to justify virtually any act of violence, no matter how extreme.¹³⁶

The Uncertain Status of the Shi'ites

Like Arab Sunnis, public opinion polls show that Arab Shi'ite favor a unified Iraq and a strong central government. Such polls also show that Iraqi Shi'ites tend to be highly religious – more so in terms of their support for recognition that Iraq should be an “Islamic state” than Sunnis – but do not favor a theocratic state or anything approaching the present state in Iran. With the possible exception of Sadr, leading Iraqi clerics do not support anything approaching Iran's concept of a supreme leader, and key figures like the Grand Ayatollah Sistani strongly oppose direct clerical participation in the government or politics.

Key Shi'ite political parties like Al Dawa and SCIRI have a strong religious character, but are largely secular in their 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. 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 risk of a major civil war in Iraq seems limited, but it cannot be dismissed. Iraqi Arab Shi'ites resent the US presence, but most seem to realize that the fact 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. Not all recognize the need to forgive their past treatment, to include Sunnis in the government and military, or to resist the continuing provocation of Sunni extremist attacks.

The Role of Moqtada al-Sadr

Moqtada al-Sadr now *seems* to be committed to participating in Iraq's political process, and to opposing any split between Arab Sunni and Arab Shi'ite. His Mehdi (Mahdi) Army did, however, present 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. 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 various battles and political compromises that led Sadr to turn away from armed struggle in the late fall and early winter of 2004 seem to have changed this situation significantly. US officials indicated that the number of attacks had dropped significantly to between zero and five a week in early 2005, and they remained at this level through May 2005. More important, Sadr joined the Shi'ite coalition in the election campaign and his supporters play a role in the new National Assembly and government.

General John Abizaid remarked in March 2005, however, “we have not seen the end of Muqtada Sadr's challenge.”¹³⁷ 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 Jafari, 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

activities arrested during earlier fighting and that all criminal charges against Sadr be dropped.¹³⁸

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.¹³⁹ 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's Council for Vic and Virtue launched at least one attack on secular students in Basra for having a mixed picnic.¹⁴⁰

Sadr revived the Mehdi (Mahdi) Army, which was again beginning to be openly active in parts of Southern Iraq such as Basra, Amarah, and Nasiriyah, and still had cells in Najaf and Kut as well. While some US official sources stated the army was relatively weak, it began to hold parades again, and 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.¹⁴¹

By the late spring of 2005, the Mehdi (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 play a major role. Unlike most militias, it also 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.¹⁴²

The Role of Other Shi'ite Factions

The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and the faction of Abdul Aziz al-Hakim also still have large militia elements, and some Sunni groups have sometimes accused of committing atrocities against them. Al Dawa, the Badr Corps, and the Iraqi Hezbollah remain potential security problems, and Sunnis feel particularly threatened by the Badr Corps.

Broader tensions exist between Sunni and Shi'ite. Both Iraq's Sunni interim president, Ghazi al-Yahwar, and King Abdullah of Jordan have sounded warnings about the risks of Shi'ite dominance in the January 30, 2005 elections and possible Iranian influence.¹⁴³ These warnings may well be exaggerated. Iraqi Shi'ites are Iraqi nationalists, not tools of Iran, and neither Iraqi Shi'ite clerics – aside from the Sadr faction – nor most of the Shi'ite population support a clerical role in politics. Yet, no one can predict how stable Iraq's political structure will be in spite of the January 30, 2005 election.

Shi'ite and Kurdish militias pose a risk of a different kind. Sunnis accuse them of killings, intimidation and a host of other crimes, while Shi'ites and Kurds see them as a potential source of aid in fighting the insurgency. This issue acquired new urgency in early June 2005, when Prime Minister, Jafari held a press conference in which he lauded the Kurdish Pesh Merga and the Badr Organization, formerly the Badr Brigade. Iraqi President, and Kurd, Jalal Talibani joined the prime minister as well as the founder of the Badr Organization and SCIRI head, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, at Hakim's headquarters to celebrate the anniversary of the founding of the Badr group.¹⁴⁴

The president applauded what he, and presumably Jafari, viewed as the militias' positive contributions to Iraq. Talibani stated, "[The Badr Organization] and the Pesh Merga are wanted and are important to fulfilling this sacred task, to establishing a democratic, federal and independent Iraq."¹⁴⁵ Addressing a variety of allegations against the two militias, Talibani remarked, "It [Badr Organization] is a patriotic group that works for Iraq's interest and it will not be dragged into sectarian or any other kind of struggle."¹⁴⁶ Jaafari went on to dub the Badr Organization a "shield" protecting Iraq.

The difficulty is that such militias were supposed to be abolished under the guidelines set out in the interim government. Iraqi officials state that they are nominally under the control of the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of the Interior, though the Kurds have long vowed to maintain the independence of the Pesh Merga as a means to defend their autonomous area.

Further, questions remain about the Badr Organization, which has been vehemently condemned by many Sunnis. 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. Though this cannot be definitively refuted, the Coalition has yet to find evidence of such activity on part of the Badr Organization. Making matters worse, the Sunnis opposed the appointment of Bayan Jabar as Minister of the Interior, claiming that, as a member of SCIRI, he was a pawn of the Iranians and that the ministry's Wolf Brigade, led by Abdul Waleed, was responsible for some of the assassinations of Sunni figures.¹⁴⁷ Yet again, the coalition has failed to find any evidence to support such claims.

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While it is far from clear whether the Badr Corps or even Shi'ites are to blame, some Sunnis also 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 claimed that at least 30 cases had been found by late June. The killers were said to have seized some victims wearing police uniforms – which can be bought cheaply in much of Iraq – but also to have 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 is possible that insurgents have done this to try to foment sectarian tension, but revenge killings and intimidation are at least possible.¹⁴⁸

Though it would certainly hamstring the new Iraqi government to alienate these militias, maintaining their full structure and chain of command within the Iraqi security forces

increases the chances that those units will continue to maintain ultimate allegiance to the leadership of the Badr or the Kurds. Thus, the security 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.

Insurgent Pressure to Move Toward Civil War

While the election turnout initially dealt an apparent blow to the Sunni insurrection, much of the post-election 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. While most Shi'ite leaders strongly resisted any calls for reprisals against Sunnis, other Shi'ites called for such action, and there do seem to have been Shi'ite killings of Sunni clergy and civilians.¹⁴⁹ Some top leaders also called for bringing key militias like the Shi'ite Badr Corps and Kurdish Pesh Merga actively into the struggle. Some US officials, however, were optimistic in the summer of 2005. Brig. Gen. John Custer stated, "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."¹⁵⁰

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.

Basra was effectively been 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 was intimidated or pushed aside by such elements in May, and Shi'ite militia joined the police and took over. 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. 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.¹⁵¹

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 that Sadr and other Shi'ite elements will hold together, or that other splits will not occur during 2005. Iraq must deal with forging and approving a constitution and with moving towards general elections at the end of the year without any clear picture of what political leaders, political parties, and power sharing arrangements will emerge in the process.

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, and striking back at the Sunnis rather than seeking to include

them. Shi'ite political leaders have generally been careful to avoid this so far, but the preaching in mosques has become more polarized, and popular tension is growing. Attacks like the bombings in Karbala and Najaf on December 20, 2004 have been followed up by many similar anti-Shi'ite attacks since the elections. At least some Sunni Arab and Islamist extremist insurgents are certain to continue to try to provoke sectarian Sunni versus Shi'ite rift using any means possible, no matter how bloody and violent.

The Kurds and Other Minorities

The Kurds represent a faction that is now considerably more powerful relative to other Iraqi factions in military and security terms than their 15% of the population. 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.

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 Pesh Merga. 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.

There are serious tensions between the Kurds, the Turcomans, 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.

Tension between the Kurds and Iraqi Arabs and other minorities has been particularly 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 is violent.

There has also been some armed violence between Kurds, Arabs, and Turcomans, 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.

According to US government documents and interviews with Turcoman families, Kurdish security forces abducted hundred of Turcoman from Kirkuk in the spring and summer months of 2005 and put them in prisons deep within acknowledged Kurdish territory.¹⁵² This was an apparent bid to create an overwhelming Kurdish majority in order to lend greater legitimacy to the Kurds claim on Kirkuk.

The Kurds also face the problem that at present they have no control over Iraq's oil resources or revenues, and no access to any port or lines of communication that are not subject to Iraqi, Turkish, or Iranian interdiction. They also have a very uncertain economic future since they have lost the guaranteed stream of revenue provided by the UN Oil-For-Food program, Iraq can now export oil through the Gulf and reopen pipelines to Syria as a substitute for pipelines through Turkey, and there is far less incentive to smuggle through Kurdish areas now that trade is open on Iraq's borders. The Kurds also face the problem that Iran, Syria, and Turkey all have Kurdish minorities that have sought independence in the past, and any form of Iraqi Kurdish autonomy or independence is seen as a threat.

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 Arbil 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 Arbil 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 1998.¹⁵³

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.

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 Turcomans from the city and transported them to prisons in established Kurdish territory.¹⁵⁴ 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 Arbil 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.¹⁵⁵ 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.¹⁵⁶ According to Kirkuk's chief of police, Gen. Turhan Yusuf Abdel-Rahman, 40% of his 6,120 officers probably assisted in the abductions despite his orders and that they followed the directives of the KDP and PUK instead. Abdel-Rahman stated, "The main problem is that the loyalty to the police is to the parties and not the police force. They'll obey the parties' orders and disobey us."¹⁵⁷ 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 do seem to have agreed on a compromise local government in June 2005, but the city continues to present a serious risk of future conflict.

All these problems are compounded by the rebirth of 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.¹⁵⁸ These same factors help explain why Turkey has actively supported Iraq's small Turcoman minority in its power struggles with Iraq's Kurds.

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 jihadi groups in Iraq like Ansar al-Sunna, and even links to intelligence services from nearby countries.¹⁵⁹ 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.

The Role of Crime and Criminals

The vast majority of Iraqi criminals have limited or no ties to the insurgents, although 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. 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 currency.¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, at least some Shi'ite criminal groups and vendettas use the insurgency or Sunnis as a cover for their activities.

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. They also are a powerful force behind local vigilante and militia efforts that at least indirectly challenge the legitimacy of the central government.

Crime also has the impact of sabotage even when there is no deliberate intent to support the insurgency. It adds to the image of ineffective governance by acts like wire and equipment thefts that limit the government's ability to distribute electric power. It deprives the government of oil revenues through oil thefts, and adds to Iraq's fuel problems by the endemic theft of gasoline.

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, and were largely a combination of crime, tribal vendettas, vengeance killings, and mercenary kidnappings.¹⁶¹

Other Forms of Financing the Insurgency

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.

A senior intelligence officer in the US Defense 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:¹⁶²

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 dead 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."¹⁶³

The Problem of Syria

Foreign countries also play a role. Both senior US and Iraqi officials feel that Syria may overtly agree to try to halt any support of the insurgency through Syria, but allows 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 seem to 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, is a US officer who 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.¹⁶⁴ General Casey highlighted Syria's complicity in this regard when testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee on March 8, 2005. He stated:

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.¹⁶⁵

The US State Department spokesman described Syria's role as follows in the late spring of 2005:¹⁶⁶

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 several alleged insurgents who were captured in Iraq. Many of the men, from Sudan, Egypt and Iraq, claimed that they were trained in Syria – at least three believed that they were 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.¹⁶⁷

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.¹⁶⁸ 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.¹⁶⁹

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 went against other intelligence officials had said, Custer stated:¹⁷⁰

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 border interacted with a tradition of lawlessness and lack of Syrian ability to create 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 a 1,000 years ago. It's all a smuggling economy."¹⁷¹ Syria faces problems because its border forces are relatively weak, they lack training and equipment, and much of the border is only demarcated by an earthen berm. 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.

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 Allawite minority). However, such a view, analysts say, is extremely near-sighted as it is quite possible that extremists in Iraq could return the very way that they came and cross back into Syria, bringing practical guerilla warfare experience with them much like the Mujahideen 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."¹⁷²

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."¹⁷³ The studies sought to compare the returning Mujahideen from Afghanistan to those who fought in Iraq. Like Syria, those countries could be threatened by the fighters who return with advanced warfare skills.¹⁷⁴ 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.¹⁷⁵

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."¹⁷⁶

In a speech before the UN Security Council in May 2005, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar 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."¹⁷⁷ 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.¹⁷⁸

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."¹⁷⁹ 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 claimed that when the US pressured the Syrian government in late 2004, men like him were taken into custody by Syrian agents only to be released several days later.¹⁸⁰

He openly admitted to ferrying men, weapons, and money into Iraq, himself possibly fighting on one occasion, and stated that he was routinely tailed by Syrian agents 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.¹⁸¹ He claimed that he had seen a rise in the number of Saudis coming to Syria to be transported to Iraq to join the insurgency. Purportedly, Ibrahim and others were inspired by a radical Syrian preacher named Abu Qaqa. 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.”¹⁸² 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.¹⁸³ 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.”¹⁸⁴

In July 2005, the US Treasury Department announced that information obtained from Saddam Hussein’s half brother and former advisor, Sabawi Ibrahim Hasan al-Tikriti, indicated that Tikriti’s four sons were responsible for supplying money, arms, explosives and other means of support to the insurgents in Iraq from bases in Syria. Reportedly, Tikriti supplied street addresses for each of his sons. One son, Omar, is suspected of being behind several of the attacks on US forces in Mosul.¹⁸⁵ The US Treasury Department eventually blocked the assets of six of Saddam Hussein’s nephews. 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.”¹⁸⁶

Acting Assistant Treasury Secretary Danier Glaser asserted that cash couriers from the region, Syria in particular, was 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.¹⁸⁷

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.¹⁸⁸ 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."¹⁸⁹ The militants who were interviewed claimed 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 claimed that some attacks were even planned from Syrian territory.¹⁹⁰

Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim Jafari 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.¹⁹¹ US Lt. Gen. John Vines estimated in summer 2005 that about 150 fighters crossed into Iraq from Syria each month.¹⁹² This presented problems for both Iraqi and Coalition forces because Iraq had comparatively few border posts and many isolated posts had been attacked and some had been destroyed or abandoned.¹⁹³ A major effort was underway to rebuild them and strengthen the Iraqi border forces, but it so far has made limited progress, and the morale and effectiveness of these border forces is often still low.

The border area around Huasaybah (Qusaybah) in Iraq has long been a center for smuggling and criminal activity. Two Muslim tribes in the area – the Mahalawis 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.¹⁹⁴

The entire route along the Euphrates from Hit and Haditha to Ubaydi, Qaim, Karbilah, Qusaybah, and Abu Kamal in Syria has also 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 so serious a center for some of the insurgents who fled from the fighting in Ramadi and Fallujah that the US Marine Corps launched its largest offensive since Fallujah against insurgent forces in the area, sometimes meeting stiff resistance from both Iraqi Sunni insurgents and Sunni Islamic extremist groups.¹⁹⁵

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.

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.

It is also important to note that Syria plays a role in dealing with some of Iraq's Shi'ites as well as its Sunnis. 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 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.

The Problem of Iran

The role Iran plays in the Iraqi insurgency is highly controversial. Iran certainly has an active presence in Iraq and has ties to several key Shi'ite political parties. These include key elements in the Shiite-based United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) that emerged as Iraq's most important political coalition in the January 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 since the early 1980s, as well as other areas. They almost certainly have a network of active agents in Iraq at present.

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. Some senior Iraqi Interim Government officials clearly see Iran as a direct and immediate threat.

Iraqi interim Defense Minister Hazem Sha'alan claimed 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 Shiite 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."¹⁹⁶ Sha'alan made the following 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 defence 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*].”¹⁹⁷

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 "axis" or "crescent."

In an unusual interview aired on Iraqi TV on January 14, 2005, Muayed Al-Nasseri, commander of Saddam Hussein's "Army of Muhammad," claimed 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.”¹⁹⁸

It should be noted, however, that Iran has repeatedly denied these charges. Moreover, most of the US and Iraqi officials interviewed during 2004, and through mid-2005, viewed claims that Iran was an active supporter of the Sunni insurgency, or playing a currently hostile role in Iraq, with scepticism. Senior ministers in Iraq's newly elected government—some Sunni—largely discounted Iran as an immediate threat. American experts seem more concerned with the potential role Iran could play in any Iraqi civil conflict, or once a Shi'ite political majority takes 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.”¹⁹⁹

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 -- is a quietest who opposes the idea that religious figures should play a direct role in politics.

Moreover, the Grand Ayatollah Sistani has 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 Iraq should not be a theocratic state, much less under the control of a *velayat-e faqih*.

The analysis of the International Crisis Group, and of many US experts in and outside Iraq interviewed for this analysis, do not support the existence of any major Iranian effort to destabilize or control Iraq through June 2005.²⁰⁰ However, the present and future uncertainties surrounding Iran's role, however, can scarcely be ignored. Iran does seem to have tolerated an Al Qa'ida presence in Iran, or at least transit through the country, as a means of putting pressure on the US, in spite of Al Qa'ida's distinctly uncertain tolerance of Shi'ism. 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, and 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."²⁰¹

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.²⁰²

Iran faces a dilemma. It needs US support for Iraq to help it deal with the insurgency and provide economic aid. Yet, it fears the US presence in Iraq, and the risk of 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 activities in nuclear proliferation. 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. At this point in time, however, these seem to be risks rather than present realities.

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 are 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.

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."²⁰³

Perhaps exacerbating the debate about cross border operations were the conflicting reports that the US, who considers the PKK a terrorist organization, had ordered the military to capture the organization's leaders. A member of the Turkish military claimed 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."²⁰⁴

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 invested in for over four decades, an autonomous Turkish Kurdistan is out of the question for Turkish policy-makers.

Despite the present tension in U.S. 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. The most recent example of Turkish effort to help the creation of a stable and unified Iraq was the 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.

The Problem of Jordan

Jordan shares a border with Iraq and some analysts believe that a limited number of insurgents may cross into Iraq from that border. Most Arab Jordanians are very much opposed to the rise of a Shi'ite dominated Iraq.

The Jordanian government, however, has trained a good number of the Iraqi security forces and is very much concerned with extreme Islamist elements within its own territory. 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. There is little to no evidence that the Jordanians are either actively helping any insurgents or turning a blind eye to them.

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.²⁰⁵

A Jordanian, Raad Mansour al-Banna, is the main suspect in a suicide bombing of a police recruitment site in Hilla in February 2005, considered the single deadliest attack, in which 125 people were killed.²⁰⁶ Commentators point out that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is himself a Jordanian. It should be noted, however, that the Jordanian government sentenced Zarqawi to death in absentia and that though there may be a some Jordanian involved in the insurgency, Jordan has been very cooperative in its efforts to train Iraqi police and to monitor its borders.

Iraqi Views of the Threat

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, and sometimes 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. There was also no agreement on whether the threat was getting better or worse, although most felt the election was a major step forward and that insurgent attacks were less successful than they feared.

Like the US and MNSTC-I, they see four major threats:

Zarqawi and Outside Islamist Extremist Organization Fighters: Mostly foreign Arab and from other countries. Cannot quantify, but 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. No way to quantify, but

some feel is in the 15,000 to 30,000 level depending on how estimate full time and part time fighters.

Iraqi Native Islamist Extremist Organization Fighters: Small and just emerging. Cannot quantify, but numbers are small and probably well under 500. The problem is 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. Often seem to cooperate with terrorists and insurgents. Many different levels of seriousness, but numbers are very high, as is impact.

Some Iraqis—particularly Sunnis—feel elements of various militias are becoming a problem. Some accuse the Shi'ite militias of atrocities against Sunnis, and Arabs accuse the Pesh Merga of supporting ethnic cleansing in the north, though the details are unclear.

Iraqi officials feel MNSTC-I estimates of the insurgent threat are misleading because they seem to only include hardcore insurgents. They also feel that the Minister of Defense was generally correct in including some 200,000 sympathizers in one guess at the threat. He stated, "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."

Inclusion versus Conflict

Civil war is not a risk, it is an ongoing reality. The question is just how intensive it will become. The insurgency has gradually created a low-level civil war, and Sunni Islamist extremists have made a concerted effort to drive it towards a broader Sunni vs. Shi'ite conflict. Much of the future nature of the insurgency in Iraq depends on the wisdom and pragmatism of Iraq's present and emerging political leaders over the course of 2005 through 2007. This will be especially true especially before, during, and after the effort to create a new constitution, the referendum to follow, and the full-scale election now scheduled for December 2005.

Iraqi and US policymakers clearly understand the issues and risks involved. US and other MNSTC officials pressed hard for "inclusion" before the elections, and for Iraqi government contacts and negotiations with the so-called "rejectionist" elements among Iraq Sunni Arabs after the elections. In addition to the visits by Secretary Rumsfeld discussed earlier, US Deputy Secretary of State, Robert Zoellick, visited Iraq after the election and in May. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited Iraq on May 16, 2005 -- again to deliver the message that the government must be inclusive, avoid purges of the civil service and Iraqi forces, and develop the existing Iraqi force structure as rapidly as possible. Senior US officers have delivered the same message, as has the US Embassy team.

Shi'ite Resistance to Sectarian Conflict

So far, Iraq's Arab Shi'ite leaders have resisted polarization along ethnic and sectarian lines. Key religious leaders as diverse as the Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, and the Moqtada al-Sadr have been strong voices calling for inclusion and opposing any general reprisals against Iraq's Sunnis. Iraq's new president and prime minister both stressed a strategy of inclusion and amnesty upon taking office.²⁰⁷ Iraqi

officials have also continued to negotiate with those who boycotted the elections - some of whom have shown an interest in joining the new political structure and being included in writing the constitution.

Forming the new Iraqi cabinet presented problems, in part because so many Sunnis chose not to participate in the political process before the January 30th election. Some new officials have also been a source of tension. The new Minister of the Interior, Bayan Jabar, had some Sunni figures call for his removal because they felt he was tied to SCIRI's Badr Corps, which they blamed for attacks on Sunnis.

The new cabinet did, however, include seven Sunnis. Iraq's new Minister of Defense, Sadoon al-Dulaimi, was chosen after a long political struggle to find a Sunni with real political credentials who was acceptable to Iraq's Shi'ites and Kurds. Dulaimi was a former officer with training as a sociologist. He became an exile during the Iran-Iraq war and had been sentenced to death in absentia by Saddam Hussein. He had returned to Iraq after Saddam's fall, and had set up the Baghdad-based Iraq Center for Research and Strategic Studies, which conducted a number of Iraq's public opinion surveys.

While some Sunnis charged he did not have the political weight to be a serious leader, he was the member of the government who announced on May 16, 2005 that Iraqi forces would stop raiding Sunni mosques and "terrifying worshippers."²⁰⁸ He was also a man that many of his subordinates came to respect, although some still continued to fear a Shi'ite purge of Sunni workers in the ministry. Other key Sunnis included Abid Mutlak al-Jubouri, one of three deputy prime ministers, and Osama al-Najafi, as Minister of Industry.

The Uncertain Role of Iraq's Sunnis

There have been positive signs from Iraq's native Arab Sunnis as well. As has been noted earlier, there were growing signs of tension, and sometimes clashes between Iraqi Sunnis and foreign-led Sunni Islamist extremist groups in the spring of 2005. Even hardline voices also have shown a deep concern for national unity. In late May, Harith al Dhari, a senior Sunni Imam who ignited sectarian tensions when he blamed the Badr Corps for killings of Sunnis, condemned the killing of a prominent Shi'ite cleric.²⁰⁹

In early April 2005, many of the native Iraqi Sunni clerics in the Association of Muslim Scholars reversed their previous condemnation of Sunni Iraqis who joined the security forces. Ahmed Abdul Ghafour al-Samarrai, a leading cleric in the organization gave a Friday sermon encouraging Iraqi Sunnis to join the army and police, to prevent Iraq from falling into "the hands of those who have caused chaos, destruction, and violated the sanctities."²¹⁰ A total of 64 Sunni native Iraqi imams and religious scholars signed the fatwa that al-Samarrai wrote, including such leading previously hard-line imams as Ahmed Hassan al-Taha of Baghdad.²¹¹

Sunni groups like the National Dialogue Council, a body composed of 31 Sunni groups -- and Sunni political figures in the government like Adnand Dulami -- have long pushed for inclusion. Sunni Islamist extremism and sectarian violence have pushed other Sunni leaders in this direction as well. On May 21st, over 1,000 Sunni Arab clerics, political figures, and tribal leaders declared an end to their boycott of the government-oriented political system and said they were uniting in a Sunni bloc and wanted to actively

participate in the drafting of the constitution. This included both moderate and hard-line members of the Iraqi Islamic Party and Association of Muslim Scholars.

There are only 17 Sunni members of the 275-person National Assembly. No one knows how a Shi'ite majority will behave or govern. There have been unexplained Iraqi security raids on seemingly peaceful Sunni political groups like the Dialogue Council. Some Sunnis have also charged that government forces have deliberately raided their mosques, mistreated prisoners, and may have executed Sunni civilians. At the same time, Sunnis have been unrealistically demanding and deeply divided over how to deal with any movement towards inclusion.

The Sunni clerics in the Association of Muslim Scholars who urged their followers to join the Iraqi forces did so in an ambiguous fatwa, stating that the "new army and police are empty of good people, and we need to supply them...Because the police and army are a safeguard for the whole nation, not a militia for any special part, we have issued this fatwa calling on our people to join the army and police."²¹² This was a far cry from reports in September 2004 that indicated that the Association's spokesman, the son of the president of the Association, supported the targeting of what he termed 'collaborators.'²¹³

An investigation by the New York Times raised serious questions as to whether Dialogue Council's leaders were prepared to accept an Iraq that was not Sunni ruled. The Times found that the Council's conservative Islamic secretary general, Fakhri al-Qaisi, felt that Shi'ites were only 30% of the population and not 60%, and argued that Sunni Arabs were closer to 40% than 20%. He also reacted to the raid on the Council's office by saying that the Council was interested in negotiation but that, "I think it's a scheme to wipe us out, destroy us," he said. "Their slogans about democracy are all but lies."²¹⁴

According to the Times, he said that vice president Sheik Ghazi al-Yawar, the highest-ranking Sunni in the government, "...hasn't protected his friends or cooperated sincerely with us in the council." He described the new Minister of Defense, Sadoun al-Dulaimi, as a "double agent." Saleh Mutlak, another Council member, charged that the leaders of the military wing of Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), one of the two leading Shi'ite religious parties, had been a major obstacle in the negotiations with the new government. He also said that Prime Minister Jafari was half-hearted: "We could not reach anything with him," he said. "He speaks in a vague way. He never comes to the point."

While this was only one report at a time of considerable tension, interviews with Iraqis revealed the same Sunni claims about demographics and attitudes towards the elections. It is also clear that some senior figures in both SCIRI and Prime Minister Jafari's Al Dawa party believe in purging the new government of Ba'athists and setting very demanding requirements for any inclusion. These do seem to include Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, the leader of SCIRI who is not in the government but is a key voice in Shi'ite politics.

The initial group of 55 members of the legislature chosen to draft the new constitution on May 10, 2005 included 28 Shi'ites from Prime Minister Jafari's United Iraqi Alliance, 15 Kurds from the Kurdish Alliance, eight members from former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's Shi'ite dominated alliance, and one each to a communist, a Turcoman, a Christian, and one Sunni Arab. At US urging, the government offered on May 26, 2005,

to add 15 more Sunni seats to the 101 seats in the Constitutional Commission actually doing the draft, which would have given Sunnis a total of 17 seats or nearly 20% of the total.²¹⁵

Underlying these negotiations were the fears that the option to delay the writing of the constitution by six months might be invoked and that either that event, or the insistence of the negotiators at the constitutional committee on a certain number of seats for Sunni Arabs deemed unacceptable by Sunni negotiators, might precipitate a withdrawal of Sunni participation in the writing of the constitution and the loss of an opportunity to sap some support among the Arab Sunni community for the insurgency. Jafari, however, said that he would not seek to invoke the extension.

Adnan Dulaimi, head of the Sunni affairs department within the new Iraqi government and a Sunni himself, brought up the specter of such a Sunni rejection. "If they don't agree at the end [to 25 Sunni Arab seats], we'll withdraw from the process of writing the constitution. We will never accept the 13 [additional plus the two we have] seats they want to give us. In the referendum, if they don't agree to our demands, we'll call on three provinces to reject the constitution."²¹⁶

Other Sunni politicians and negotiators, however, suggested that the problem would not be as intractable as indicated by Dulaimi. Naseer Ani, a Sunni directly involved in the negotiations, stated, "We insist on the number, but it is politics – everything is possible."²¹⁷ Reportedly, 1,000 Sunni scholars, politicians, and eminent figures met at the end of May to discuss the community's political role. In early June, Iraqi politicians were mulling over the possibility of expanding the committee to 69 members so that they could accept the 25 seat Sunni demand.

In mid-June, the constitutional committee offered to give the Sunnis 10 advisers on the committee, but no more than the 15 full members. The Sunni delegation to the committee agreed to the arrangement but stressed its dissatisfaction with the number of voting members it had. Key Sunni factions seem to have reluctantly agreed to such a compromise in June 2005.

Making matters more difficult, it became increasingly clear that the various Sunni groups remained

Many issues still remain, however, regarding the role Sunnis will play in the constitutional process and the election that will follow, and how much popular support any Sunnis who do participate will get; their inclusion remains at risk. It is also clear that any failure at inclusion that was recognized as valid by a broad majority of Iraqi Sunnis could have a critical impact on both the short and long-term stability of Iraq and the pace of the insurgency. The new constitution can be vetoed if a two-thirds majority of voters in Iraq's 18 provinces decide to vote "no." Sunnis dominate Al Anbar Province and have large majorities in Salahuddin and Nineveh Provinces. The effort to draft a constitution was also on a tight schedule: The draft had to be approved by a 55-person committee of the National Assembly, and then by the 275-member Assembly, by August 15th, and then accepted in a national referendum by October 15th.

The key issues for Iraqi success in fighting the insurgency are whether large numbers of Sunnis that are now neutral or passively hostile towards the Iraqi Interim Government

can be persuaded to join in the political process, and whether some form of stable new balance of power can be found that will make Sunnis accept a political process dominated by the Shi'ites and where the Kurds and other minorities also play a role proportionate to their size. There cannot be an end to the Sunni insurgency without a political solution that the vast majority of Sunnis at least tolerate and hopefully support.

At the same time, the Iraqi government must show it can actually govern at the local and regional level. The Iraqi military, security, and police forces must reach a level of critical mass where they are large enough to serve the country, large enough to take over most of the burden of maintaining security from the US. They must be effective enough to show that the new Iraqi government is not only legitimate in terms of politics but in terms of force. Political legitimacy is essential to good government, but no government can govern that lacks the force to ensure the security of its population and deal with insurgent and terrorist threats.

There also will almost certainly be at least another year of intensive fighting against Islamist and extremist elements that will reject inclusion in the political process almost regardless of what political system emerges during the coming elections. There are only three ways to deal with Iraq's most hard-line elements: Kill them, imprison them, or drive them out of the country. There is a very real war to fight, and it is still unclear when or if Iraqi forces will really be ready to fight it with anything like the total numbers required.

No one who has dealt with Arab Iraqis can be unaware of the fact that most think of themselves as Iraqis and nationalists, and not just as Sunnis and Shi'ites. Insurgency can turn into a broader civil war, however, and the future inclusiveness of the Iraqi government is anything but clear in a climate where Iraq is just beginning to develop political leaders and parties.

Insurgency and the Effectiveness and Visibility of Iraqi Military, Security, and Police Forces

Finally, much depends on Coalition and Iraqi success in creating effective Iraqi forces that are the *visible* element of security operations that Sunnis and other Iraqis see on a day-to-day basis. The lack of highly visible Iraqi forces, and the fact that US occupiers have both won virtually every past victory and still dominate most security activity, have also reinforced the image of a nation where fighting is done by foreigners, non-Muslims, and occupiers.

Many Coalition and Iraqi Interim Government tactical victories have also produced a costly political and military backlash. Even successful military engagements can lead to the creation of as many new insurgents as they kill or capture. The lack of popular support means that many existing insurgents disperse with their weapons or bury their weapons and supplies for later retrieval.

To return to points made earlier, many Iraqis see US and Coalition-dominated military actions as actions by "occupier" forces; they are a source of constant propaganda and fuel conspiracy theories. Real and imagined civilian casualties, collateral damage, and the impact on civilians and shrines that these engagements cause remain a constant problem. All of these points reinforce the need to create larger and more effective Iraqi forces as soon as possible, and to give them full force protection and counterinsurgency capability.

At the same time, Iraqis also do not want their own military constantly visible in the streets. Most ordinary Iraqis also see crime as much more of a day-to-day threat than insurgents. As a result, the efforts of the Iraqi government and MNSTC-I to create effective police and security forces in parallel with creating effective military forces are absolutely critical to nation building, political legitimacy, effective government, and the effort to eventually create a true civil society.

This raises serious issues about how the new Iraqi military, security, and police force treat their own population. One of Jalal Talibani's first acts in becoming Iraq's new president in April 2005 was to offer an amnesty to Iraqi Sunni insurgents. This followed up on a more limited offer of insurgent by then Prime Minister Ayad Allawi in 2004. Such acts of political inclusion are as critical to Iraqi success in defeating the insurgents as the effectiveness of Iraqi forces.²¹⁸

There are indications, however, that some Iraqi forces – including commando units – continue to use far more brutal methods in searching for, interrogating, and dealing with other Iraqis than Coalition forces are permitted to use.²¹⁹ These abuses include their treatment of Iraqi detainees. Moreover, there are indications that some Coalition forces encourage Iraqi forces to do this, and use them as proxies for actions they are not allowed to take. At a minimum, US and other Coalition forces operating with Iraqi units sometimes stand by and allow such activities to take place.²²⁰

US State Department human rights reporting notes 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, sounds an important warning about the Iraqi police, security, and National Guard actions through December 31, 2005:²²¹

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 claimed that they had been tortured or mistreated. The reported 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 predetention 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...

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 2005,²²²

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.

The Coalition, US, and MNSTC-I efforts to give the new Iraqi military, security, and police forces human rights training and the kind of respect for the rule of law necessary to win hearts and minds are vital to success. The same is true of NATO training efforts and those of other countries.²²³ There is no question, however, that such training is not always successful, and that Islamist suicide bombings and atrocities sometimes provoke Iraqi forces to extremes.²²⁴ There are also controversial units like the 5,000 man Special Police Commando that are Iraqi recruited and trained. While such units are often highly effective, they have not been models of respect for human rights.²²⁵

Counterinsurgency and counterterrorist operations are necessarily brutal and violent; war is war. They also, however, are also battles for the hearts and minds of both the people where the war is fought and of the enemy. The effectiveness of Iraqi forces is heavily dependent on their winning such support and not mirroring the actions of Saddam Hussein's forces and regime. As similar US errors at the Abu Ghraib prison compound demonstrated all too clearly, excessive force and interrogation methods quickly become counterproductive and self-defeating even if they produce short-term results. The political dimension and impact of military, security, and police operations is not one that

either Coalition or Iraqi commanders and forces can afford to ignore, even in the heat of battle. The primary purpose of Iraqi operations is to reforge a nation; not defeat an enemy.

¹ For a broader discussion of these issues, see W. Andrew Terrill, Strategic Implications of Intercommunal Warfare in Iraq, Carlisle, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, February 2005.

² For many of the problems involved, see Robert M. Perito, "The Coalition Provisional Authority's Experience with Public Security in Iraq," Washington, US Institute of Peace, Special Report, 137. April 2005.

³ For a summary historical perspective, see Ian F. Beckett, "Insurgency in Iraq: A Historical Perspective," Carlisle, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, January 2005.

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Born Ahmed al-Khalayleh on Oct. 20, 1966. His father was a traditional healer, and he and his nine siblings grew up poor. He took the name "Zarqawi" as homage to his hometown of Zarqa, Jordan.

In 1983 he dropped out of high school. People there remember him as a petty criminal, simple, quick-tempered, and barely-literate gangster

In 1989 he went to Afghanistan to fight. He and Bin Laden rose to prominence as "Afghan Arabs" - leading foreign fighters in the "jihad" against Soviet forces. After the Soviets pulled out, he worked as a reporter for a jihadist magazine.

Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi returned to Jordan around 1992, and was convicted of hiding weapons and of conspiring to overthrow the monarchy and establish an Islamic caliphate. Imprisoned until 1999, fellow inmates say he devoted hours of study to the Koran. He also is said to be a specialist in poisons. Not long after his release, he fled the country.

His movements have been difficult to track. Western intelligence has indicated that Zarqawi had then sought refuge in Europe. German security forces later uncovered a militant cell which claimed Zarqawi as its leader. The cell-members also told their German interrogators their group was "especially for Jordanians who did not want to join al-Qaeda".

After Europe he is believed to have moved to Afghanistan and to have set up a training camp in the western city of Herat, near the border with Iran. Students at his camp supposedly became experts in the manufacture and use of poison gases. It is during this period that Zarqawi is thought to have renewed his acquaintance with al-Qaeda.

He is believed to have fled to Iraq in 2001 after a US missile strike on his Afghan base. US officials argue that it was at al-Qaeda's behest that he moved to Iraq and established links with Ansar al-Islam - a group of Kurdish Islamists from the north of the country.

He was first identified as a suspect at large in a plot to attack U.S. and Israeli targets in Jordan, culminating in the 2002 slaying of U.S. diplomat Laurence Foley. Jordan tried him in absentia and sentenced him to death for allegedly plotting attacks on American and Israeli tourists.

He is believed to have traveled extensively since 9/11, reportedly spending time in Iran, Pakistan, Syria, Lebanon and Turkey.

In the run-up to the Iraq war in February 2003, US Secretary of State Colin Powell told the United Nations Zarqawi was an associate of Osama Bin Laden who had sought refuge in Iraq.

On 29 August 2003 Ayatollah Sayed Mohamad Baqir Al-Hakim, the head of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), was killed in a car-bomb blast in the holy city of Al-Najaf in southern Iraq. It was one of the bloodiest attacks. US authorities pinned the blame on Zarqawi.

In February 2004, the US military released a letter it claimed to have intercepted in which Zarqawi apparently asks al-Qaeda to help ignite a sectarian conflict in Iraq.

In October 2004 his group, Tawhid and Jihad, declared allegiance to AQ.

He is suspected of direct involvement in the kidnapping and beheading of several foreigners in Iraq - even of wielding the knife himself. In May 2004 the American contractor Nick Berg, taken hostage in Baghdad, was among the first to be beheaded. The CIA believes with a "high degree of confidence" that it was Zarqawi who read out a statement and then carried out Berg's murder. Those killed in this fashion include another American, a South Korean and a Bulgarian, and a string of others. A Turkish hostage was shot three times in the head.

In the days leading up to the Jan. 30 Iraqi election, the terror leader declared a "fierce war" on democracy and was believed to be the voice in audiotapes urging people not to vote.

In April 2005 U.S. forces said they had recently come close to capturing him in Iraq.

See Amnesty International's "Iraq in Cold Blood: Abuses by Armed Groups," July 2005, pg. 13.

¹⁰³ See Amnesty International's "Iraq in Cold Blood: Abuses by Armed Groups," July 2005, pg. 14.

¹⁰⁴ Carl T. Williams, "Suicide Attacks Rising Rapidly," Los Angeles Times, June 2, 2005, p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ Patrick Quinn and Katherine Schrader, "Foreigners Blamed for Iraq Suicide Attacks," Associated Press, July 1, 2005.

¹⁰⁶ Patrick Quinn and Katherine Schrader, "Foreigners Blamed for Iraq Suicide Attacks," Associated Press, July 1, 2005.

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¹⁰⁸ US Department of State, *Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Country Reports on Terrorism 2004*, Department of State Publication 11248, April 2005, pp. 94-95.

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¹¹¹ PBS Newshour Jim Lehrer interview with Gen. Richard Myers, July 12, 2005, available at http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/military/july-dec05/myers_7-12.html.

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DATE	ATTACK	NUMBER KILLED	STATEMENT DATE/FORMAT
8/19/03	Suicide car bombing UN HQ in Baghdad	at least 17	Audio - April 6, 2004

8/29/03	A car bomb explodes outside Iraq's holiest Shiite shrine in Najaf	Hakim killed plus at least 82 others	Audio – April 6, 2004
10/26/03	Missiles launched from improvised launcher system hit Al Rashid Hotel, while Wolfowitz is visiting	1	Audio – April 6, 2004
11/12/03	Suicide truck bomb kills Italians based in Nasiriyah	26	Audio – April 6, 2004
12/27/03	a series of car bomb, mortar and machine-gun attacks on coalition forces in Karbalaa	19	Audio – April 6, 2004
1/24/04	American forces on the Al Khalidiya bridge, IED	3	Audio – April 6, 2004
1/28/04	Suicide bombing – CIA in Al Shahin hotel and the Presidential Palace in Baghdad	4	Audio – April 6, 2004
2/18/04	Suicide attacks on Polish forces in Al Hilla	13	Audio – April 6, 2004
3/17/04	Mount Lebanon hotel, car bomb (unclear whether bomber was killed)	27	Audio – April 6, 2004
4/24/04	Suicide bombers crash into oil stations in port in Basra	3	Web Statement - April 25, 04
4/29/04	10 US soldiers killed when car bomb detonates south of Baghdad	10	Web Statement May 2, 2004, claiming responsibility for attack on April 29, saying that 70 soldiers were allegedly killed.

4/30/04	UNCONFIRMED ATTACK: no news reports confirm attack which website alleges took place		Web Statement, May 2, 2004 Website states that someone called Abu Al Walid Al Tunesi (<i>the Tunisian</i>) carried out a suicide attack against five army vehicles carrying 15 soldiers each in Al Youssefeya neighborhood south of Baghdad. The statement claims four were totally destroyed and 51 soldiers killed
5/2/04	Mortar attack in Ramadi area kills six US Marines, 5/2/2004	6	Web Statement – May 1, 04
5/2/04	Suicide bomber detonates car at the edge of Green Zone, at US HQs	6	Web Statement – May 6, 04
5/11/04	Beheading of Nick Berg,	1	Video – May 11, 04
5/13/04	UNCONFIRMED: Suicide attack on a US patrol in al Taji area in northern Baghdad		Web statement May 13, 2004
5/18/04	Suicide car bomb explodes near US HQs killing Izzedine Salim, at that time head of IGC. Salim was near a checkpoint outside the compound when the bomb went off, killing him and several others.	7	Web Statement 6 – May 17, 04

5/22/04	A suicide attacker exploded a car bomb outside the home of a deputy interior minister Saturday, killing at least three police and one civilian. The blast hurled two cars onto the front lawn of the house, and police fired shots to disperse distraught bystanders who scuffled with them.	4 (+ Suicide B's)	Web Statement 8 – May 22, 04
6/5/04	Ambush along road to Baghdad airport kills two Americans and two Poles working for Blackwater USA security company	4	
6/6/04	Twin car bombings outside former Iraqi air base used by U.S. army just north of Baghdad – 6/6/04	9	Website claims responsibility
6/14/04	Car bomb attack on vehicle convoy in Baghdad kills 13 including, 3 GE employees.	13	Website allegedly written by “military wing of Monotheism and Jihad” – also believed to be led by Zarqawi – claims responsibility
6/17/04	Two car bombs in N. Baghdad kill 41 Iraqis	41	Web statement, June 17, 2004 claims responsibility for attack on N. Baghdad
6/22/04	Beheading of S. Korean hostage	1	Video – June 22, 04
6/24/04	In Mosul 44 people were killed in attacks that included a series of car bombs	See below	Web statement, June 24, 2004 claims 5 attacks on police stations in Mosul
6/24/04	Assault on Iraqi security forces in Baaquba	See below	Web statement, June 24, 2004 claims 2 attacks in Baaquba
6/24/04	Assault on Iraqi security forces in Ramadi	See below	Web statement June 24, 2004 claims 1 attack in Ramadi

6/24/04	Assault on Iraqi security forces in Baghdad	Total of approx. 100 killed in series of attacks on 6/24	Web statement June 24, 2004 claims 1 attack in Baghdad
7/8/2004	Mortar attack in Samarra	1 Iraqi 5 Americans	Web Statement July 11, 2004
Early July	Claims attack outside Allawi's home		Web statement July 14, 2004
7/13/2004	Beheading of Bulgarian hostage	1	Video Statement: al Jazeera airs
7/17/2004	Suicide bomber hits motorcade of Iraqi Justice Minister Malek Dohan al-Hasan, 83	3 Iraqi guards 2 civilians	Web statement
7/18/2004	Defence Ministry official Issam Jassem Qassim was shot dead outside his home by three gunmen	1	Unclear whether Zarqawi claimed responsibility for attacks *note: that over the last month, several Iraqi bureaucrats have been killed. Unclear whether Zarqawi's group responsible for all.
7/19/2004	Suicide car bombing blows up fuel tanker near Baghdad police station	10 killed 62 wounded	Unclear if Zarqawi responsible
8/1/2004	Car bomb blasts outside at 5 Iraqi churches	Kill at least 15	Iraq accuses Zarqawi of attacks

08/11/2004	A Web site carried a one person video on Wednesday claiming to show militants beheading a "CIA agent" in Iraq (The CIA said that they were unaware...Terrorism consultant Evan Kohlman who has seen the video of this alleged beheading thinks the person on video looks middle-eastern, maybe the Egyptian we heard about earlier this week)		A Web site used by Islamic militants carried a video on Wednesday claiming to show militants beheading a "CIA agent" in Iraq
08/16/04	Egyptian Hostage beheading	1	Unconfirmed according to Egyptian Foreign Minister

08/24/04	Assassination bid on Iraq's interim Environment Minister Mishkat al-Moumin		Zarqawi's group claimed Zarqawi's group claimed
09/06/04	Zarqawi escapes US-led ambush near Fallujah		Confirmed by US
09/07/04	Car bombing kills seven US soldiers and three Iraqi national guards	10	Zarqawi claims attack on tape received by AFP

09/12/04	Zarqawi speaks on audiotape for 45 minutes about humiliating the American coalition forces referring to the fighting in Najaf and the Sunni Triangle		Confirmed by CIA
09/14/04	Car bombing outside Baghdad's main police headquarters; several hours later, 12 policemen and their driver are killed in drive-by shooting	At least 47 killed; 114 wounded	Claimed by Zarqawi, al Tawhid
09/16/04	Kidnapping of 2 American nationals, Eugene Armstrong and Jack Hensley and one British national, Kenneth Bigley	3	Claimed by Zarqawi, Confirmed by US
09/20/04	Beheading of American Hostage Eugene Armstrong	1	Claimed by Zarqawi, al Tawhid, Confirmed by CIA Video- September 20, 2004
09/21/04	Beheading of American Hostage Jack Hensley	1	Claimed by Zarqawi on Iraqi TV and website Confirmed by US
09/30/04	Two car bombs explode. Then another.	At least 51 killed, more than 130 wounded	Zarqawi's group is claiming responsibility
10/24/04	44 Iraqi soldiers were executed by shots to the head	At least 44 killed	Zarqawi's group claimed responsibility via a claim on the Internet
12/3/04	Gunmen storm police station, killing 16 officers; Car bomb exploded during clash between Iraqi security forces and rebels.	30 killed, 16 were police	Zarqawi claimed responsibility for the attacks

12/13/04	Suicide car-bombing at checkpoint	6 killed ; 19 injured	Zarqawi's group claims responsibility according to a statement posted on an Islamic website regularly used by militants
12/19/2004	Car bombs explode through funeral procession in Karbala	60 killed	Zarqawi's group claims responsibility
12/29/04	Assassination attempt against Abdel Aziz Al-Hakim- Iraq's largest Shiite Muslim party	15 killed ; 50 wounded	Zarqawi's group claim responsibility by a statement posted on an Internet website
1/1/05	Video released on Islamist website shows 5 Iraqi security offices being shot to death by militants	5 killed	Zarqawi's group claims responsibility via a posted message
1/4/05	Assassination of Gov. Ali Al-Haidari	7 killed (6 were his bodyguards)	Zarqawi group claimed responsibility for the assassination in a message posted on a website
1/21/05	Attempt to bomb Australian embassy in Baghdad	2 killed	Zarqawi claims responsibility
2/28/2005	A suicide car bomber strikes a crowd of police and Iraqi National Guard recruits in Hillah	125	Zarqawi group claims responsibility
4/19/2005	a suicide bomber drove his car in the Adhamiyah district	4 killed, 31 wounded	Zarqawi
5/7/2005	Two explosive-laden cars hit a U.S. security company envoy in Baghdad	At least 22 people	Zarqawi group claims responsibility

MAY 2005	There have been at least 22 car bombings in Baghdad since the new government took office at the beginning of May. This month alone has seen a series of attacks across Iraq that have claimed the lives of nearly 500 people, marking one of the deadliest periods since the fall of Baghdad in 2003.	Up to 500 throughout the month	Mix of Zarqawi's and other radical Islamist groups
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