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The Gulf Military Forces in an Era of Asymmetric War

Iraq

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Introduction

Iraq's strategic location, its access to water, its rivers, and its fertile soil has long made it a prize for outside military powers including the Romans, Muslim forces from the Arabian Peninsula, Persians, Mongols, the British, and now the United States.

More recently, Iraq was occupied by Britain during the course of World War I. In 1920, Britain carved it out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, and had it declared a League of Nations mandate under British administration. The result was a Sunni-dominated state with a Shi'ite majority and a Kurdish minority that wanted independence.

The British mandate failed to cope with Iraqi nationalism, and led to active rebellion. This rebellion failed in military sense, in the face of British military action that included the use of poison gas, but it eventually forced Britain to give Iraqi independence. A Hashemite monarchy was established that survived a series of coup attempts, and a British invasion during World War II.

A Pattern of External and Internal Violence

Hashemite rule could not survive the rise of Arab nationalism, however, and was brutally overthrown in 1958. From that point onwards, Iraq was ruled through a series of coups and military dictatorships until the Ba'ath seized power. Saddam Hussein consolidated his rule in a new series of bloody purges and executions in 1979, and ruled until he was overthrown in 2003 by the US-led invasion.

Iraq has repeatedly sought to dominate the region politically and militarily. It never, however, has succeeded in having a major political impact on its neighbors, and its Ba'ath Party has done far more to feud with its counterpart in Syria than to have an impact on others. Its long arms race with Iran failed to keep up with the Shah until the Shah fell from power in 1979. This appeared to leave Iraq the dominant power in the Gulf, but its invasion of Iran in 1980 quickly showed that force size was not a measure of military competence and effectiveness. Iraq was forced on the defensive in 1982, and only survived because of European and Russian arms sales and tens of billions of dollars worth of Kuwaiti, Saudi, and other aid.

Iraq did achieve significant victories against an exhausted Iran in 1988, made successful use of mass attack with missiles and poison gas, and shattered much of Iran's ground forces, and made it accept a ceasefire largely on the basis of the prewar boundary. Iraq was so deeply in debt and under so much financial pressure, however, that it seized Kuwait in 1990. The resulting Gulf War cost Iraq roughly 40% of its forces and led to more than a dozen years of sanctions, UN arms embargo, UN efforts to fully discover and rid Iraq of the weapons of mass destruction it had built up before the Gulf War, and political and economic struggles over sanctions.

Iraq had to deal with more than outside conflicts. The British used divide and rule techniques that put a Sunni elite firmly in control of a Shi'ite majority that showed little desire for British rule. This Sunni elite remained in power until Saddam Hussein's fall, often exploiting its position at the expense of Iraq's Shi'ites and Kurds. The Kurds repeatedly sought independence, and fought a nearly five-year rebellion against the Iraq regime until they lost the support of the Shah. Iraq was, however, forced to concede to many Iranian demands as the Shah's price for abandoning the Kurds when Iraq signed the Algiers Accord in 1975.

The Shi'ites remained largely loyal during the Iran-Iran War, although 100,000s fled Iraq for Iran or deserted. The Kurds did not. Many rebelled, and were put down in ruthless attacks using air and artillery strikes on civilians, the use of poison gas, and forced relocations. The aftermath was as violent as the fighting. Marsh Arabs were punished for harboring deserters by seeing their marshes drained and their way of life destroyed. Tribal groups and towns that showed any resistance to the regime were suppressed by force, often using mass executions.

The situation grew worse after Iraq's defeat in the Gulf War in 1991. UN inspectors discovered that Iran had systematically lied about the nature of its chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons efforts, and missile programs, virtually up to the time of the US-led invasion. While the US and Britain made almost totally inaccurate estimates of Iraqi activity at the time they struck, this came after more than a decade of constant Iraqi lies and obfuscation. The Shi'ite and Kurdish uprisings in Iraq following Iraq's defeat were put down with savage force, and left the Kurds isolated in their own US-secured enclave in the north from 1992 onwards. The Shi'ites were largely suppressed, but subject to constant military and security action, with occasional strikes against the regime from Shi'ite exiles based in a Iran. Saddam retaliated by supporting the MEK (Mujahedin-e Khalq), a ruthless Iranian terrorist cult, in retaliation. Saddam also encouraged tribalism and Sunni religious action as ways of trying to cement his power.

Iraq's economy was crippled by a combination of massive state mismanagement, corruption, war, civil conflict, and UN sanctions from roughly 1982-2003, a period of over two decades. It was also severely distortion by nepotism and favoritism in ways that favored Sunni elites, and compounded the nation's economic problems. At the same time, Iraq had built up a massive military machine during the Iran-Iraq War that it could not afford to pay for or maintain by 1989, and then lost virtually all military resupply and modernization as a result of the UN arms embargo imposed in the summer of 1990. Iraq's military machine decayed steadily from wear, mismanagement, lack of parts and modernization, and internal security purges for some 13 years.

The fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in March and April 2003 did not make things better. The victorious Coalition was unprepared for the stability and nation-building efforts necessary to offer Iraqis a better way of life, and was slow to improvise the tools it needed. Iraq's existing political system and governance imploded under the pressure of war, and the "de-Ba'athification" of the Iraqi armed forces and government. Much of the secular core of the state was excluded from any meaningful position, even though the vast majority of those involved had simply gone along with Saddam and the Ba'ath to survive. Far too many of the exiles who returned and gained positions of power favored their own careers, Shi'ite parties and religious factions, and a large number had links to Iran and Iranian sponsored militias. The Kurds sought their own interests.

The end result is not without hope, but it has been three years of growing insurgency, and sectarian and ethnic divisions by Arab Shi'ite, Arab Sunni, Kurd, and other minorities. There is an elected government with a mix of all of Iraq's factions, an ongoing political process, and a serious effort to rebuild Iraq military and police forces. At the same time, the insurgency is now dominated by Sunni Neo-Salafi Islamist extremists who sometimes call for Jihad against Shi'ites, mixed with many more moderate Iraqi Sunnis who question whether there is a clear alternative to force in seeking a share of power and wealth. The Shi'ites at a minimum want a share of power that matches their dominant share of the population. Many want revenge for decades of inferiority, and some factions increasingly are using militias and other forces to attack

Sunnis in retaliation for the insurgency. The Kurds want at least autonomy and control of Iraq's northern oil fields as a source of wealth.

As a result, Iraq is the most destabilizing single factor in the Gulf, outpacing any other source of national tension like Iranian proliferation, and the transnational threat of Islamist extremism. This will disappear if Iraq finds a viable political compromise between its factions, reestablishes effective governance, creates national military and police forces, and can gradually move its economy forward. If it fails in these areas, however, it could divide into some form of federalism or sink into large-scale civil war – potentially dividing Sunni and Shi'ite in support of their respective faction inside Iraq in many other nations in the Gulf. A natural division along such lines between a Shi'ite Iran and the Sunni Southern Gulf states, Jordan, and Egypt is just one case in point.

These challenges make predicting the future of Iraq all the more difficult if not impossible. Some things do, however, seem clear. Creating a stable Iraq will largely depend on bringing Iraq's factions together, dealing with outside interference, building viable economic and political institutions, and dealing with the presence of foreign troops for many years to come. Any meaningful analysis of Iraq's prospects of stability will also mean successful efforts to build effective internal security and military forces that are free of sectarian manipulations. This would mean examining Iraq's internal security, paramilitary, and military forces' ability to defeat the insurgency and insuring security in Iraq's major cities.

Iraq's Strategic Importance

Iraq has strategic importance for many other reasons. Iraq's history, size, and natural resources make it one of the most important nations in the Gulf. As **Map 1** shows, Iraq borders all the key countries in the Gulf: Iran (1,458 kilometers), Saudi Arabia (814 kilometers), and Kuwait (240 kilometers). In addition, it borders two important countries in the Levant--Syria (605 kilometers) and Jordan (181 kilometers)--as well as Turkey (352 kilometers). In addition, Iraq has a 58-kilometer coastline on the Gulf.

These borders, and Iraq's limited access to the Gulf, have helped lead to territorial disputes, and conflicts with its neighbors. Iraq's proxy struggle with Iran during 1970-1975 was largely a board struggle and fight for control of the Shatt al-Arab on the part of the Shah. The Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) not only involved an effort to win back what was lost in 1975, but an Iraqi effort to seized Iran's oil rich areas in the southwest which Iraq claimed were Arab, followed by Iranian areas to take "Shi'ite" territory in Iraq's south. Iraq first threatened to invade Kuwait shortly after British forces left in 1932. When it did invaded in August 1990, Iraq annexed Kuwait as the "19th province of Iraq" based on claims that can be traced back to the Othman Empire, as well as territorial tensions over claims to oil fields on the border and Iraq's desired to win secure access to the Gulf. This led to the Gulf War in 1991, when a UN mandated coalition forced Saddam Hussein forces from Kuwait and imposed economic sanctions, the no-fly zones, and political and military isolation of Iraq.

Iraq's energy resources have also been both a curse and a blessing. Its proven oil reserves are estimated to be one of the largest in the world. In 2005, Iraq was estimated to have roughly 10 percent of the world's total proven oil reserves (115 billion barrels of oil).¹ In addition, Iraq was estimated to have approximately 45.01 billion barrels of undiscovered oil reserves. Despite these vast reserves, Iraq's oil production capacity lags behind other countries. This largely due to

failures and mismanagement of Saddam Hussein's regime to modernize Iraq's oil sector as well as economic sanction and conflicts that have prevented much needed foreign investments from flowing in.²

As has already been touched upon, its sectarian divisions are a source of tension and conflict in the region. Iraq is unique in the sense that it is one of two Arab countries where the majority is actually Shi'ite. Iraq's population is estimated to be 60-65 percent Shi'ites and 32-37 percent Sunnis. Since the creation of the "modern" Iraq, it has, however, been ruled by Sunni government: a Sunni monarchy between 1932 and 1958 and the Ba'ath regime from 1958 until 2003. In addition, to these sectarian divisions, Iraq has several ethnicities: Arab 75-80 percent; Kurdish 15-20 percent; Turkoman, Assyrian or other 5 percent.³

This diversity has caused tensions internally as well as externally. Throughout Saddam Hussein's reign, the Ba'ath government had to fight a war with Iran (a Shi'ite nation) while at the same time it had to pay close attention to aspiration of its Kurdish and Shi'ite population. These tensions have led to the chemical attacks on the Kurds in Halabjah in 1988 as well as many attacks on the Shi'ites in the south including following the Shi'ites uprising after the Gulf War in 1991.

Following the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003, the sectarian tensions are central in any debate over the future of Iraq. In addition to hundreds of mass graves of Shi'ites and Kurds, almost all of the key destabilizing forces go back to Iraq's ethnic and sectarian divisions. Defeating the insurgency, the ability of Iraq to establish viable political institutions, and reconstruction efforts have been plagued by sectarian divisions.

Map 1: Iraq



Source: CIA, "Iraq," 2004, available at http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/iraq_pol_2004.jpg

Iraqi Military Development

Iraq has gone from being the Gulf's preeminent military power before it invaded Kuwait, and still a major power before the Coalition invasion in 2003, to a power is just beginning to rebuild its regular military forces. This transition is summarized in **Figure 1**.

Iraq is now concentrating on creating a mix of regular forces, special security forces, and police forces than can defeat an ongoing insurgency, and not on creating the heavier combat forces that are necessary to deter and defend against outside enemies. It is almost totally dependent on two factors for success. One is the success of its political process in uniting the country bringing Sunnis back into the political fold, and undercutting political support for the insurgency. The second is creating a political system and pattern of government that will lead Shi'ite and Kurdish factions to stop using their various militias to attack Sunnis and challenge the authority of the central government. The third is the willingness of the Coalition, and US in particular to keep

proving the combat troops and support, military advisors, and money necessary to give Iraq's new forces the time and resources they need to rebuild.

It will, at best, be a close run thing. A report by the US Department of Defense makes it clear that even the most optimistic Coalition authorities recognized by mid-2006 that the threat to Iraqi stability had broadened to include a wide range of groups:⁴

- **Sunni and Shi'a Rejectionists** who use "violence or coercion in an attempt to rid Iraq of Coalition forces... subvert emerging institutions and infiltrate and co-opt security and political organizations. Beyond this shared goal, Rejectionist groups diverge regarding long-term objectives. Rejectionists continue to employ a dual-track strategy in Iraq, attempting to leverage the political process to address their core concerns. Since the Samarra bombing, sectarian Rejectionist groups, including militant Shi'a militias, have increased attacks against rival sectarian groups and populations. Both Sunni and Shi'a Rejectionists have conducted reprisal ethno-sectarian attacks.
- **Former Regime Loyalists.** Saddam loyalists are no longer considered a significant threat to the MNF-I endstate and the Iraqi government. However, former regime members remain an important element involved in sustaining and enabling the violence in Iraq, using their former internal and external networks and military and intelligence expertise involving weapons and tactics. Saddamists are no longer relevant as a cohesive threat, having mostly splintered into Rejectionists or terrorist and foreign fighters.
- **Terrorists and Foreign Fighters.** Terrorists and foreign fighters, although far fewer in number than the Rejectionists or former regime loyalists, conduct most of the highprofile, high-casualty attacks and kidnappings. Many foreign fighters continue to arrive in Iraq via Syria... Al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI) is currently the dominant terrorist group in Iraq. They continue efforts to spark a self-sustaining cycle of ethno-sectarian violence in Iraq... AQI pursues four broad lines of operation: anti-MNF-I, antigovernment, anti-Shi'a, and external operations. Ansar al Sunna (AS) is another significant, mostly indigenous, terrorist group that shares some goals with AQI. Because of similar agendas, AQI and AS tend to cooperate on the tactical and operational levels. Most recently, there have been indications of cooperation between AQI and Rejectionists as well. It is estimated that 90% of suicide attacks are carried out by AQI...The current positive effects of intolerance for Al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI) among Sunni Arabs may be limited if Sunnis perceive a lack of progress in reconciliation and government participation or if increased sectarian violence draws various Sunni insurgency elements closer. Local
- **Militia Groups.** Militia groups help both maintain and undermine security in Iraq, as well as contribute to achieving the goals of their affiliated political parties. In many cases, these militias, whether authorized or not, provide protection for people and religious sites where the Iraqi police are perceived to be unable to provide adequate support. Sometimes they work with the Iraqi police. In some cases, they operate as a power base for militia leaders trying to advance their own agendas. Militia leaders influence the political process through intimidation and hope to gain influence with the Iraqi people through politically based social welfare programs. Militias often act extra-judicially via executions and political assassinations—primarily perpetrated by large, well-organized Shi'a militia groups and some small Sunni elements. Militias are also sometimes engaged in purely criminal activity, including extortion and kidnapping...Polling data indicate that most Iraqis agree that militias make Iraq a more dangerous place and should be disbanded...The most prominent militia groups are the Badr Organization—essentially the paramilitary wing of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, but technically its own political party now—and Shi'a cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM). The Kurdish Peshmerga is technically an "authorized armed force," rather than a militia. Shi'a militias have been involved in sectarian violence. Tactics employed by such militias have varied, including death squads, Sharia courts, and campaigns of intimidation. Shi'a militias, including the Badr Organization and Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM), have been accused of committing abuses against Sunni civilians, exacerbating sectarian tensions. In addition, JAM is implicated in much of the unrest that followed the February 22 Samarra mosque bombing. The Shi'a militias receive arms and other support from Iran, reinforcing Sunni fears of Iranian domination and further elevating ethno-sectarian violence.

These outside threats are compounded by sectarian and ethnic divisions within the government of Iraqi forces which sometimes aid the Sunni insurgents and more often aid violent Shi'ite and

Kurdish groups. Endemic corruption in the government, and crime throughout civil society, add a further mix of threats.

Iraq has had success in creating truly unified regular military forces, but it is doubtful such unity could survive a full-scale civil war. The internal security forces are being reorganized, but some elements did commit abuses and attacks against Sunnis and supported Shi'ite militias in such attacks. The police are still weak, corrupt, and divided by sect and ethnic faction. A "year of the police" began in 2006, but efforts to embed Coalition advisors in police stations and create partner units are still uncertain. Moreover, problems with corruption, crime, and ethnic and sectarian divisions are compounded by large numbers of facilities protection forces, armed security guards, and local security forces – almost all untrustworthy and as much a threat as an asset.

Figure 1: Iraq before the Gulf and Iraq Wars versus Mid-2006

	1990	2002	Mid-2006
Manpower			
Total Active	1,000,000	389,000	264,600
Regular	425,000	375,000	116,100
Reserve	850,000	650,000	0
Other MOI Security Forces	0	0	43,800
Paramilitary	40,000	44,000+	-
Police & Highway Patrol	NA	NA	104,700
Army and Guard			
Manpower	955,000	350,000	114,700
Regular Army Manpower	-	375,000	-
Reserve	480,000(recalled)	650,000	-
Total Main Battle Tanks	5,500 - 6,700	2,200 - 2,600	77+
Active Main Battle Tanks	5,100	1,900 - 2,200	?
Active AIFV/Recce, Lt. Tanks	2,300	1,300 - 1,600	38+
Total APCs	7,100	2,400	120-200
Active APCs	6,800	1,800	?
ATGM Launchers	1,500	900+	?
Self Propelled Artillery	500+	150-200	?
Towed Artillery	3,000+	1,900	?
MRLs	300+	200	?
Mortars	5,000	2,000+	?
SSM Launchers	?	56	?
Light SAM Launchers	1,700?	1,100	?
AA Guns	?	6,000	200-300
Air Force Manpower	40,000	20,000	600
Air Defense Manpower	10,000	17,000	0
Total Combat Aircraft	513	316	0
Bombers	20	6	0
Fighter/Attack	284+	130	0
Fighter/Interceptor	223+	180	0
Recce/FGA Recce	10	5	0
AEW C4I/BM	1	0	0
MR/MPA	0	0	0
OCU/COIN/CCT	0	0	0
Other Combat Trainers	157	73	0
Transport Aircraft*	63	12	3
Tanker Aircraft	4?	2	0
Total Helicopters	584	375	10-25
Armed Helicopters*	160	100	0
Other Helicopters*	424	275	10-25
Major SAM Launchers	600+	400	0
Light SAM Launchers	?	450	0
AA Guns	-	3,000	0
Total Naval Manpower	5,000	2,000	800
Regular Navy	5,000	2,000	-
Naval Guards	0	0	-
Marines	-	-	-
Major Surface Combatants			
Missile	4	0	0

Other	1	0	0
Patrol Craft			
Missile	8	1	0
Other	6	5	3
Submarines	0	0	0
Mine Vessels	8	3	0
Amphibious Ships	6	0	0
Landing Craft	9	-	-
Support Ships	3	2	0

* Includes navy, army, national guard, and royal flights, but not paramilitary.

Note: No accurate counts exist of Iraqi Army equipment because some items are being recovered out of weapons dumps

Source: Adapted by the author's from interviews, IISS, *Military Balance*; *Jane's Sentinel*, *Periscope*; and Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, *Military Balance in the Middle East* (JCSS, Tel Aviv); US State Department, "Weekly Status Report," data as of June 14, 2006

Military Spending & Arms Imports

There are no meaningful data on the cost of Iraqi forces and military imports since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003. They have clearly built back from nearly zero to several billion dollars a year, but neither the US aid program nor the Iraqi budget provide detailed accountability, and much of the cost of Iraqi forces is now paid indirectly through US and British support in virtually every aspect of Iraqi operations.

To put the current state of effort in perspective, Iraqi defense expenditures and arms transfers before the conflict. Even by a conservative estimate, Iraq imported over \$150 billion worth of arms and equipment to manufacture and deliver weapons of mass destruction between 1975 and 1991. It spent billions on fighting the Kurds during the early to mid-1970s. It spent over one hundred billion more dollars on the Iran-Iraq War, which Saddam Hussein started by invading Iran. It then lost as much as \$50 billion more by invading Kuwait -- both as the result of attacks on its military equipment, infrastructure and production facilities by the U.N. coalition, and of lost economic opportunity costs.

Military expenditures and wartime losses drained Iraq's economy for nearly two decades. Iraq's oil wealth is relative. Measured in constant 1988 dollars, Iraq's GNP peaked during 1979 and 1980, with totals of \$118 billion and \$120 billion respectively. The Iran-Iraq War rapidly cut its GNP to \$70.4 billion in 1981, and a combination of wartime damage and lower oil prices then cut it to levels by \$70 billion throughout the rest of the 1980s. Iraq's GNP was \$65.8 billion in 1988, about half of its GNP in 1980. Iraq kept its military expenditures as a percent of GNP at around 30% from 1978 to 1984, and could only sustain these expenditures through a combination of massive foreign borrowing and aid from southern Gulf States like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. After 1984, however, Iraq exhausted its borrowing capability, and the Iran-Iraq War grew more threatening. As a result, military spending rose to 52% of the GNP in 1985, and stayed near to 50% for the rest of the 1980s.⁵

By 1989, the year that lay between the Iran-Iraq War and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Iraq's economy was experiencing a serious economic crisis. Experts disagree over the economic statistics involved, but not over the seriousness of the crisis. According to the CIA, for example, Iraq's GNP was then \$35 billion and its per capita income was only \$1,940.⁶ This level of per capita income is not unusual by Third World standards, but it was low relative to Iraq's economy in 1979, and to the wealth of a far less developed Saudi Arabia -- which had a GNP of \$79 billion and a per capita income of \$4,800.

The IISS estimates that Iraq spent \$13,990 million in 1987, \$12,870 million in 1988, and \$8.61 billion in 1990 -- although there is no way to relate this figure to what Iraq had to spend on the Gulf War, when it had to devote much of its economy to the conflict.⁷ While any accurate estimates are impossible, Iraq probably spent over 40% of its GDP on military forces during the six months before Desert Storm, and 60% of its central government expenditures -- including wartime losses. No meaningful military spending data are available for 1991, 1992, and 1993.⁸

Iraq's arms imports were a massive burden on its economy, driven by the arms race with Iran which began in the 1960s, and by the Iran-Iraq War during the period from 1980 to 1988. ACDA estimates that Iraq imported \$2,400 million worth of arms in 1978, \$3,200 million in 1979, \$2,400 million in 1980, \$4,200 million in 1981, \$7,000 million in 1982, \$6,800 million in 1983,

\$9,100 million in 1984, \$4,600 million in 1985, \$5,700 million in 1986, \$5,400 million in 1987, \$4,900 million in 1988, and \$1,900 million in 1989.⁹

According to a conservative estimate, which ignores all expenditures on weapons of mass destruction, and some deliveries of military related goods and services other than actual weapons, Iraq signed at least \$30.5 billion worth of new arms agreements between 1983 and 1990.¹⁰ The high volume of new agreements during this period reflects the fact that Iraq established a broad network of suppliers during the 1980s. It shifted away from reliance on the Soviet bloc and bought an increasing number of weapons from Europe and the Third World.

During 1979-1983, the period that covers the fall of the Shah of Iran and the first part of the Iran-Iraq War, Iraq took delivery on \$17.6 billion worth of new arms between 1979 and 1983, including \$7.2 billion worth of arms from the USSR, \$0.85 billion from Poland, \$0.4 billion from Romania, \$0.04 billion from Czechoslovakia, and \$1.5 billion from the PRC. It obtained \$3.8 billion from France, \$0.41 billion from Italy, \$0.28 billion from the U.K., \$0.14 billion from West Germany, and \$3.0 billion from other countries.¹¹

During the latter half of the Iran-Iraq War, from 1984-1988, Iraq took delivery on \$29.7 billion worth of new arms, including \$15.4 billion worth of arms from the USSR, \$0.75 billion from Poland, \$0.65 billion from Bulgaria, \$0.675 billion from Czechoslovakia, and \$2.8 billion from the PRC. Iraq obtained \$3.1 billion from France, \$0.37 billion from Italy, \$0.03 billion from the U.K., \$0.675 billion from West Germany, and \$5.2 billion from other countries.¹² The U.S. did not transfer significant numbers of weapons to Iraq, but did provide help during the Iran-Iraq War in the form of credits and loans that helped by weapons, and also provided intelligence support.¹³

If one takes the period between 1988 and 1991 -- which covers the period from the end of the Iran War in August, 1988 to the beginning of the embargo on arms shipments to Iraq in August, 1990 -- Iraq ordered only \$3.1 billion worth of arms. Some \$400 million were ordered from the USSR, \$700 million from the PRC, \$500 million from major West European states, \$500 million from other European states, and \$1.0 billion from other countries. This low rate of new orders was a product of (a) Iraq's growing economic crisis, (b) the arms embargo on Iraq after August, 1990, and (c) the fact Iraq was still receiving the backlog from the immense amount of orders Iraq already had placed during the Iran-Iraq War. Yet, Iraq took delivery on \$8.9 billion worth of arms during this same period, including \$4.1 billion worth of arms from the USSR, \$1.0 billion from the PRC, \$1.1 billion from major West European states, \$1.7 billion from other European states, and \$1.0 billion from other countries.¹⁴

The overall burden military spending and arms imports placed on Iraq's economy unquestionably helped lead to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 1, 1990, and to the Gulf War. Iraq had an annual military budget of \$12.9 billion in 1990. According to some estimates, Iraq was spending an average of \$721 per citizen on military forces, although it only had an average per capita income of \$1,950, and Iraq lacked an effective air force and had lost so much of its land force equipment in the Iran-Iraq War that it could no longer challenge Iraq. Although Iraq had cut its rate of new arms orders, it still took delivery on \$1,435 million worth of arms, and ordered \$1,125 million more during the first six months of 1990. This level of expenditure raised Iraq's international debt to at least \$40 billion -- and some experts feel in excess of \$70 billion.¹⁵

These vast expenditures did not protect Iraq from the consequences of its invasion of Kuwait. The scale of the Iraqi defeat in the Gulf War is indicated by U.S. Department of Defense estimates issued just after the conclusion of the fighting that stated UN Coalition forces had captured more than 50,000 prisoners of war, destroyed nearly 3,000 Iraqi tanks out of 4,030 in southern Iraq and Kuwait, destroyed about 1,000 out of 2,870 other armored vehicles, and destroyed nearly 1,005 artillery weapons out of 3,110.¹⁶ These estimates compare with Coalition combat losses of 4 tanks, 9 other armored vehicles, and 1 artillery weapon. While such estimates later proved uncertain, they are valid as an indication of the scale of the Iraqi defeat at the time of the cease-fire.

In contrast, Iraq's personnel losses were amazingly small compared to these equipment losses -- and USCENTCOM raised its estimate of Iraqi POWs to 80,000 and Iraqi losses to 3,300 tanks, 2,100 other armored vehicles, and 2,200 artillery pieces on March 3, 1991.¹⁷ While DIA initially gave an estimate of Iraqi killed as high as 100,000, it now seems likely that the total was only about 25,000 to 55,000.¹⁸ Total UN Coalition losses are difficult to estimate because of the unwillingness of several Arab states to provide accurate figures, but the U.S. lost 147 killed in action or who died later from combat wounds, 121 dead from non-hostile causes, 212 wounded in action, and had 44 missing in action at the time the war ended. According to one estimate, Britain lost 16 killed, 31 wounded in action, and 12 missing. Egypt had 9 killed and 75 wounded. France lost 2 killed and 28 wounded. Italy lost one killed. Saudi Arabia lost 29 killed, 53 wounded in action, and 9 missing. Senegal had 8 wounded, and the UAE had six killed.¹⁹

It is far harder to provide any meaningful estimate of Iraqi military spending and arms imports after Iraq's defeat. Iraq obviously spent a massive part of its national budget on armed forces and security after 1991, probably between 40% and 50%. It also succeeded in smuggling in some arms and spare parts in spite of the UN arms embargo and containment.

Iraq had to spend several billion dollars a year to reconstitute and maintain its forces from 1991-2003. At the time the Coalition invaded, it had built its active military forces back up to some 389,000 men with 650,000 low grade reserves. The army had some 2,600 main battle tanks, 400 armored reconnaissance vehicles, 1,200 armored infantry fighting vehicles, and some 1,800 armored personnel carriers. It had some 200 self-propelled artillery pieces, 1,900 towed artillery pieces, and some 200 multiple rocket launchers. It had some 164 helicopters in inventory, many armed, but their operational state is unclear.²⁰ Virtually all were destroyed or damaged in the fighting that followed, by looting after the war, or poor handling and storage. Iraq faced a vastly superior force in qualitative terms and was the subject of attack by some 18,000 precision-guided weapons alone.

There were some 42,000-44,000 men in a wide variety of paramilitary and security forces. Some, like elements of Saddam's Fedayeen, fought well. Most played no role in combat.

The air force had 20,000 men, and some 316 combat aircraft. These included six bombers, and some 130 fighter ground-attack aircraft, 180 fighters, and five reconnaissance aircraft, plus several hundred trainers, transport and service aircraft, and support helicopters. Virtually all were permanently damaged beyond repair when Saddam Hussein insisted they be buried to protect them from Coalition air strikes. The massive air defense command had some 17,000 men with 850 surface-to-air missile weapons, many heavy launchers like the SA-2, SA-3, and SA-6. It also had large numbers of sensors and command facilities. Almost all were lost due to fighting, looting and mishandling.

The small Iraqi navy had some 2,000 men, three minesweepers, six patrol craft, and two support ships. It ceased to play any role early in the war.

Like many intense conventional clashes with high technology weapons, Iraq casualties were limited during the main fighting, although Iraqi body count estimated that the insurgency that followed was so costly that a total of 38,000-43,000 Iraqis had died by late June 2006.²¹

Iraqi Military Manpower

The Iraqi regular military is still very much in formation, although significant numbers of combat elements are coming on line. In mid-June 2006, it had a total manning of 116,100 that Coalition forces had trained and equipped with 114,700 in the army, around 600 in the air force, and around 800 in the Navy. Another 43,800 men were in Ministry of Interior (MOI) security forces closer to regular military forces than paramilitary forces.

These figures, however, were authorized strength, and did not take account of substantial numbers of temporary absentees. Manning levels were very much in transition, and climbing rapidly. As of end-2005, however, Iraqi forces still had only 62% of their authorized officers, and 61% of their NCO, but were overmanned with enlisted manpower at 120%, much of which was still of limited quality and would have to be cut or allowed to desert, depending upon its performance in combat. The Iraqi regular military was at 92% of its authorized strength as of December 10, 2005.

As for the individual services:

- The army had 62% of its officers and 61% of its NCOs, and 121% of its enlisted manpower. Figure 38 also shows, however, that the AWOL rates were negligible for officers (.04%), very low for NCOs (1.6%), and low for overall manning (2%).
- The navy had 109% of its officers, 130% of its NCOs, and 126% of its enlisted manpower. This reflected a force very much in transition, and much of the manpower surplus was likely to be used in the future. The AWOL rates were so low as to be meaningless.
- The air force was still very much in formation and far from being manned at effective levels. It had only 55% of its officers, 32% of its NCOs, and 40% of its enlisted manpower. The AWOL rates were so low as to be meaningless.

The sectarian and ethnic composition of the ISF was a serious issue by the fall of 2005. The debate over federation in drafting the new constitution had raised the prospect of dividing the country along ethnic and sectarian lines. At the same time, the constant stream of bloody attacks on Shi'ites and Kurds, and horrific suicide bombings, led to increasing talk -- and sometimes action -- about revenge. The security services in the Ministry of Interior were increasingly found to either tolerate revenge attacks by Shi'ite militias like the Badr Organization, or to conduct them.

The new Iraqi army did not take such reprisals against Sunnis, but the issue of ethnic representation in the army was an increasing concern to the MNF-I, US commanders and officials, and the Iraqi leaders seeking to hold the country together. This prompted a major new recruiting drive targeting Sunni enlistment. Between August and October, 4,000 Sunnis were recruited, and were undergoing training by later October, according to one US military official in Baghdad.²² As of late December 2005, some US commanders in Iraq claimed that the ranks of

the Iraqi Army were roughly representative of the national population – about 60 percent Shiite, 20 percent Sunni, and 15 to 20 percent Kurdish.

Few Iraqis, or US officers directly within their advisory effort, agreed with this assessment. Maj. Gen. Salih Sarhan, a Shiite, said that the majority of the soldiers were coming from the south, and were Shiite as of late December. Nearly all of the Iraqi army's recent recruits had come from southern Shiite cities, including highly religious cities like Karbala and Najaf, where unemployment was high. The 8th and 10th divisions, for example, were almost completely Shi'ite. Meanwhile, the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th divisions in the north were overwhelmingly Kurdish. Sarhan said that the two army divisions in Baghdad were more evenly split.²³

The elections that came towards the end of the year also seemed to reflect Shi'ite and Kurdish dominance of Iraqi forces. In contrast to the surge in Sunni participation in the political process that led to a high Sunni vote in the December 15th parliamentary election, Sunni Arab representation in the ISF remained proportionately low. A special tally that consisted mainly of ballots cast by security forces, but also included votes by hospital patients and prisoners, showed that only about 7 percent of votes were cast for the three main Sunni Arab parties. Because Iraqis were overwhelmingly thought to have voted along sectarian lines, many officials believed that this vote reflected low representation of Sunnis in the ISF.

The Kurdish Pesh Merga militiamen seemed to have a disproportionately large representation in the Iraqi Security Forces. The special tally revealed that 30 percent of the votes cast went to the principal Shiite political alliance and 45 percent of the votes went to the main Kurdish slate of candidates. Lt. Col. Fred Wellman, a spokesman for the military command that oversaw training of Iraq forces, said that he did not have detailed estimates on the ethnic composition of the ISF, yet admitted that Arab Sunni representation was lagging.²⁴

Nevertheless, the May 2006 manning total of 263,400 for Iraqi forces was 14% higher than the total reported in February, and 35% higher than the total of 171,300 reported in the first quarterly report to Congress, issued in July 2005.

The Iraqi Army

The Iraqi army effectively went from zero forces in 2003, and one battalion in July 2004, to substantial force deployments by mid-2006, and had completed generating the basic order of battle of a 10 division force. It was years away from fully manning this force with trained personnel and depended on the Coalition for armor, artillery, tactical mobility, air support, and high technology command and control and intelligence. Nevertheless, Iraqi forces were active in the field.

According to a Department of Defense report to Congress in May 2006, there were two Iraqi divisions, 16 brigades, and 63 Army and National Police battalions with security lead in their areas of responsibility. These areas covered more than 30,000 square miles of Iraq. As of May 6, 2006, the MOD, MOI, or Ministry of Finance had assumed control and responsibility for 34 Forward Operating Bases from Coalition forces. The growth in the size and readiness of these Iraqi forces is shown in **Figure 2**.

As of May 2006, Iraqi Special Operations Forces (ISOF) had built up to approximately 1,600 trained and equipped personnel organized into the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Task Force (ICTF), the Iraqi Commandos, a support battalion, and a special reconnaissance unit. The ISOF was to

complete force generation by the summer of 2006, according to the DOD's May 2006 Quarterly Report to Congress. The ICTF and Commandos continued to conduct counter-insurgency operations throughout the nation. The ISOF primarily used US equipment, including the M4 carbine, M240 machine guns, M2 heavy machine guns, and up-armored HMMWVs.

Coalition officials were partnered with four divisions of the Iraqi army in the north, said that two of those divisions would be ready to take the lead in operations by the end of the summer and the other two by the end of the year.²⁵ In a video conference with the Pentagon on May 20, 2006, Lt. Gen. Peter Chiarelli, Commander of Multi-National Corps-Iraq, said that the ISF was on pace to control about 75 percent of the country's battlespace by the end of the summer. That same month, Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki said that the Iraqi army and police would be able to assume responsibility for security across the entire country by late 2007.

Equipment Holdings and Issues

The Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) Report to Congress issued in April 2006 covered Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund (IRRF)-funded activities, as well as information on Iraq Security Forces Fund (ISFF) activity. The following represent the highlights of the security and justice sector report:²⁶

- More U.S. funds have been devoted to security and justice than any other reconstruction sector. A total of \$11.6 billion has been allocated, combining funds from IRRF 2 and ISFF.
- By the end of this quarter, 82% of the \$6.35 billion IRRF allocation had been expended, and 31% of ISFF funds have been expended.
- Approximately 250,500 military and police personnel have reportedly been trained and equipped.
- More than 600 facilities have been completed -- police stations, fire stations, courts, border forts, and army facilities.

According to MNSTC-I, the Iraqi Army had received a number of war zone essentials from Coalition forces by the end of 2005: more than 95,000 assault rifles, 4,400 machine guns, almost 95,000 sets of body armor, more than 3,500 vehicles, 83,000 batons, and more than 105,000 sets of handcuffs.²⁷ According to Coalition planners, the Iraqi Armed Forces received equally light equipment between January 2006 and May 2006:

- more than 25,000 AK-47s
- more than 6,200 9mm pistols
- nearly 1,300 light and medium machine guns
- nearly 1,000 light and medium vehicles.
- more than 17,000 sets of body armor
- more than 15,000 Kevlar helmets.
- 176 HMMWVs, which were distributed among the divisions and Motorized Transportation Regiments.

There were exceptions. During the same time period, the Iraqi Army's 9th Mechanized Division received 77 Hungarian-donated T-72 tanks and 36 Greek-donated BMP-1 armored personnel carriers. These vehicles were integrated into the 2nd Brigade, comprised of two tank battalions and one mechanized battalion.²⁸ The 9th Motorized Rifle Division had two mechanized brigades

comprising nine maneuver battalions, and with was to include two battalions of T-72 tanks, two of T-55 tanks, and five of BMP-1 armored personnel carriers.²⁹ The 1st Mechanized Brigade of this division took over battle space in the Taji area some 25 miles north of Baghdad in January 2006, less than a year after becoming fully operational. It was equipped with T-55s and MTLBs, and largely complete, except for some logistic and supply elements.³⁰

By December 2005, 220,000-strong Iraqi Security Forces, including the army and paramilitary police, had received a total of about 600 armored vehicles. They did, however, still have a requirement for nearly 3,000 more, including more than 1,500 armored Humvee utility vehicles.³¹

As a result, equipment deliveries and plans became a growing issue with Iraqi commanders during 2006, with complaints that a lack of proper equipment precluded decisive advantage over relative well armed and equipped insurgent forces. One criticism was that corruption in the Iraqi Ministry of Defense was largely to blame for the problem. In 2005, the MOD misplaced \$1.3 billion that had been allocated to arm the troops. Another complaint from field commanders was that US and Coalition equipment deliveries did not contain the types of heavy equipment necessary to definitely crush the insurgents.³²

Support Forces

Progress was also being made in creating effective support forces. Combat support and combat service support units continued to be generated to provide critical combat enablers. As of May 2006, these included Operational Regional Support Units, Motor Transport Regiments, Logistics Support Battalions, and Headquarters and Service Companies. Strategic Infrastructure Battalions remain focused on securing critical oil pipelines. In the first quarter of 2006, the train-and-equip mission for these was increased from 4 to 11 battalions to reflect the adjusted Iraqi Army authorization.

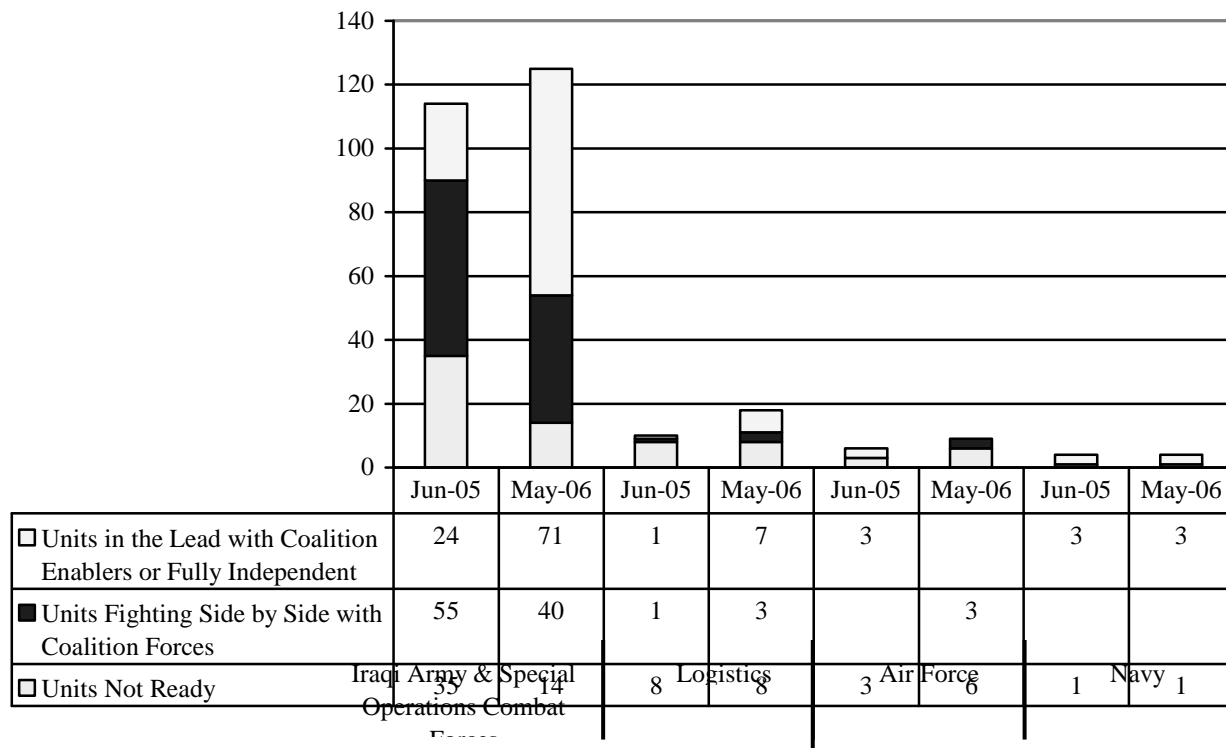
While Coalition forces continued to provide materiel movement, life support, and other combat support to the Iraqi Armed Forces, the MOD made progress in building Iraqi logistical capabilities during the first yearly quarter of 2006:³³

The National Depot at Taji, which is managed by the civilian component of the ministry, provides strategic and some operational-level supply and maintenance support through its military, civilian, and contractor staff. It provides warehouse facilities for the receipt, storage, and issue of the Iraqi Army and Air Force's national stockholding of most classes of supply and facilities for conducting vehicle overhauls and other 4th-line (i.e. national-level) maintenance support. The National Depot feeds five Regional Support Units (RSUs) that provide maintenance and supply support to nearby units. Four of these RSUs are currently operational, and the fifth is being formed. The national Maintenance Contract, which extends through March 2007, continues to provide a limited interim solution for organizational and intermediate maintenance requirements of the Iraqi Armed forces at ten different locations throughout the country. The capability to provide some routine maintenance is being developed within the support units.

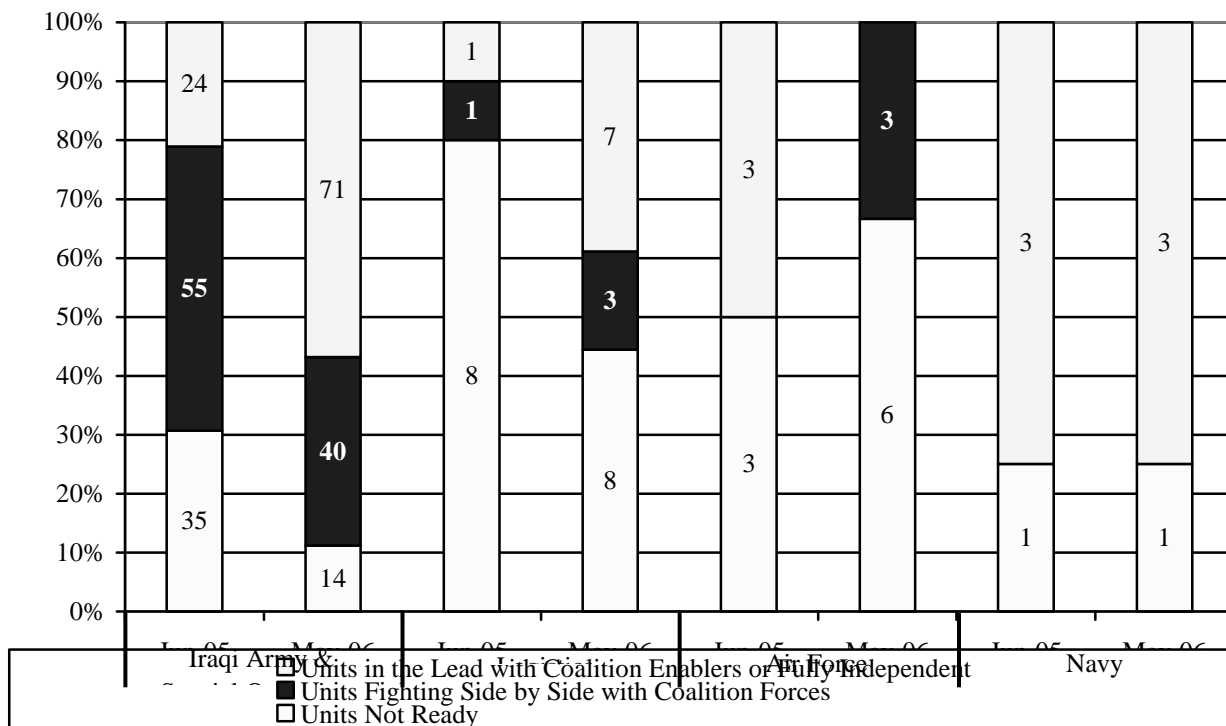
As of May 2006, more than 65% of personnel in the Iraqi Army's support forces had been trained and equipped, according to the May 2006 DOD Report to Congress, and logistics units continued to increase their capabilities.

Figure 2: Iraq's Ministry of Defense Forces' Assessed Capabilities

Number of Units



Category by Percentage



Source: Adapted from "Measuring Security and Stability in Iraq," Report to Congress, May 2006, p. 47.

The Iraqi Air Force

The Iraqi air force also made progress, although it was scarcely the symbol of Iraqi strength that had existed under Saddam Hussein. It had been a formidable force by regional standards, but Iraqi air power crumbled under the strain of the Gulf Wars, the US-UK enforcement of no fly zones, and the invasion. Iraq's fighter and surface-to-air inventory had been effectively destroyed. Many fighters had been destroyed on the ground or in the air by Coalition forces. Many of Iraq's more advanced aircraft, such as MiG-29s, were flown to Iran for safekeeping during the Gulf War, and had never been returned. Its surface-to-air had been largely destroyed during the interwar period and the invasion, and Iraqi destroyed most of its remaining combat aircraft during the invasion by burying and dispersing them in ways that made them permanently inoperable.³⁴

Like so much of Saddam Hussein's military build-up, there was no reason that Iraqi forces should now seek anything like the force levels that existed before the invasion. Nevertheless, it was clear that a new Iraqi Air Force did need to emerge, and one that eventually had the combat strength necessary to defend the country as well as deal with country insurgency.

Creating a new Iraqi Air Force, however, was anything but easy, and the new Iraqi air force still had serious problems even in operating small numbers of systems in late 2005. The air force was badly short of manning for its dedicated combat, service, and logistic support units. In early September 2005, the service grounded six of the eight surveillance aircraft that it acquired in September 2004. The planes were Jordan Aerospace Industries SAMA CH2000s, equipped with forward-looking infrared sensors. The squadron was left with just two FLIR-equipped Seeker aircraft, acquired in 2004 from Jordan-based Seabird Aviation.

The grounding, according to a U.S. military adviser to the squadron, was more the product of a contract dispute than the fault of the IAF. While the adviser declined to give specifics on the nature of the dispute, the performance of the aircraft seemed to be in question, with an industry expert citing possible problems related to the CH2000's ability to operate effectively in the heat of the Iraqi summer.³⁵

By December, however, the Iraqi Air Force was beginning to operate its C-130Es more effectively and was beginning to deploy the 23rd Transport Squadron from the US-supported Ali Base in southern Iraq to a new permanent base called "New Al Muthana." The Joint Headquarters Center of the Iraqi Headquarters had become more active in mission planning and assignments, the air force was beginning to use encrypted communications, and during one exercise, it flew nine C-130E missions with 117 passengers and 106,000 pounds of cargo during a five-day period.³⁶

The IAF also resumed helicopter training in late 2005, after problems with spare parts shortages. These problems had sidelined the training squadrons fleet of Jet Rangers for several months, The 2nd and 12th squadrons, with UH-1s, were somewhat more active initially, but their UH-1Hs began to be sent back to the US for reconfiguration into Huey IIs in January 2006.

In early 2006, the Iraqi air force had nearly 500 trained and equipped personnel, and was developing three airpower capabilities: reconnaissance, battlefield mobility, and air transport. Major assets for these capabilities included the following:³⁷

- **Aerial Reconnaissance Fleet**

- 2 Seabird Seekers
- 2 SAMA CH-2000s
- 6 AeroComp Comp Air 7SLs
- **Battlefield Mobility**
 - 4 UH-1H helicopters
 - 5 Bell 206 Jet Ranger helicopters
- **Air Transport Capability**
 - 3 C-130E aircraft

Development of Air Force personnel capabilities was underway, with the help of Coalition Advisory Support Teams. As of May 2006, the Air Force had approximately 600 trained and equipped personnel and continued to develop three airpower capabilities: reconnaissance, battlefield mobility, and air transport. The following advancements were also reported:³⁸

Iraqi reconnaissance aircraft have a limited capability to perform oil infrastructure reconnaissance and surveillance support for nationwide counter-insurgency operations. The Iraqi Air Force (IAF) reconnaissance aircraft consist of single-engine airplanes used in civilian and commercial markets. One such IAF type, the CH-2000, has continued to experience issues with carbon monoxide presence, which has limited its effectiveness. A temporary fix has been designed, and full operational capability is expected by late May. Another IAF reconnaissance aircraft, the compare, awaits the arrival of a US Air Force team, scheduled to be in theater in may, to modify the fleet and return it to operational status.

The IAF has three squadrons of helicopters (2nd Squadron, 4th Squadron, and 12 Squadron) in support battlefield mobility. Sixteen Uh-1H helicopters have returned to the United States for modifications and upgrades to the Huey II configuration. The first seven of these aircraft are scheduled to return to Iraq in January 2007, with the remainder following two to three months later. The 4th Squadron will initially operate 10 Mi-17s procured by the Iraqi MOD. Eight of these 10 have been delivered, but they are awaiting additional armor, weapons mounts, and pilot training and proficiency. These aircraft are expected to be operational by the end of 2006. The 12th Squadron operates five Bell 206 Jet Ranger helicopters, which are used for training purposes.

The 23rd Transport Squadron, with its three C-130E aircraft, completed its move to the new al-Muthanna Air Base early this quarter. This squadron has continued to perform transport, mobility, and humanitarian missions this quarter.

The Iraqi Navy

The Iraqi Navy was still in the process of becoming an effective light coastal defense force in the fall of 2005, although recruiting had improved after it adopted the Direct Recruit Replacement program started by the army. The first such naval training program had begun in May. Its naval infantry battalion was being trained for point defense of oil platforms -- a key mission in securing oil exports. In a Defense Department Briefing on September 22, 2005,

By September of 2005, the Iraqi Navy was operating five Predator Class Patrol Boats (PB), 24 Fast Aluminum Boats (Dual Outboard Engines), and ten Rigid Hull Inflatable Boats. The naval forces were further equipped with various small arms and Night Vision Devices. Plans called for the Iraqi Navy to be equipped with three al-Faw class patrol boats by December 2005 and with an additional three by September 2006. However, design deficiencies (e.g., seawater strainers

below the waterline) and construction shortcomings (e.g., poor welding) of the one Al Faw boat delivered to date caused delays in fielding the patrol boats.³⁹

Iraqi naval forces were also working with US forces in defending Iraq's two oil terminals in the Gulf – the Al Basra Oil Terminal (ABOT) and the Khawr Al Amaya Oil Terminal (KAAOT). The oil exports through these terminals were generating nearly 80% of Iraq's revenue -- less aid -- in late 2005. Iraqi marines had taken full control of the defense of KAAOT, supported by Coalition ships and naval forces in the area. A total of some 50 Iraqi marines worked with a total of some 70 US sailors.⁴⁰

Iraqi coastguard activity was active enough to lead with a clash with Iranian forces in mid-January 2006. They boarded an Iranian ship in the Shatt al-Arab waterway between Iraq and Iraq, some 27 kilometers south of Basra, because they believed it was smuggling oil. Speedboats from the Iranian Navy attacked them, killing one and detaining nine.⁴¹

In the first months of 2006, the Iraqi Navy had 800 trained and equipped sailors and marines organized into an operational headquarters, two afloat squadrons, and six marine platoons. No significant asset deliveries were made to the Iraqi Navy since early 2005. The Navy was operating five predator class patrol boats, 24 fast-aluminum boats, and 10 rigid hull inflatable boats. While the size of the Iraqi Navy did not grow significantly through spring 2006, there were reports of increased command and control capabilities at operational headquarters. However, as with the other services at this time, institutional capacity to execute acquisitions, logistics, and personnel policies remained underdeveloped.⁴²

As of May 2006, the Iraqi Navy had 800 trained and equipped sailors and Marines organized into an Operational Headquarters, two afloat squadrons, and six Marine platoons. The following advancements were also reported:⁴³

The Iraqi Navy continues to develop capabilities for surface surveillance, maritime interdiction, oil terminal protection, and support operations. The Navy has shown improvement in the command and control capability of the Operational Headquarters as well as the capability to mount a Quick Response Force for board-and-search missions, while maintaining communications with the head-quarters and operating forces.

The Iraqi Navy order of battle included the Patrol Boat Squadron, composed of 5 Predator Class boats; the Assault Boat Squadron, composed of 10 Rigid Hull Inflatable Boats; and 24 Fast Assault Boats. Force generation plans in early 2006 called for a total of six Al-Faw class patrol boats by September 2006, but the delivery of three al-Faw patrol boats continued to be delayed. The procurement of two Off-Shore Support Vessels had also been delayed by the MOD until the formation of the new government. The following advancements in training were also reported:⁴⁴

Training of the Iraqi Navy continues to be conducted by the Iraqi Navy Training Department, with the assistance of the Coalition's Navy Transition Team. Training remains focused on maintaining basic seamanship skills and conducting maritime operations. Afloat Forward Staging Base and visit board search and seizure training continues. Marine training continues to be supported by US Navy Mobile Security Detachments and includes regular marksmanship refresher training.

Paramilitary, Security, Police, and Intelligence Forces

The Iraqi police had a total of 148,500 men listed as trained and equipped as of June 14, 2006. These include 104,700 police and highway patrol forces, and 43,800 other MOI forces, including the former commando and special security forces. Unlike the regular military, however, these forces presented serious security issues.

Militia infiltration into the Ministry of Interior security and police forces was a steadily growing problem in 2005 and early 2006. Substantial numbers of men from both the Badr Organization and the Moqtada Al Sadr's Mahdi Army joined the force. In the case of the roughly 65,000 strong mix of MOI and police forces in the greater Baghdad area, the men from the Badr Organization tended to go into the MOI special security units and those from the Mahdi Army tended to join the police.

Both MNF-I and the Iraqi government were slow to react. The Iraqi government and Coalition continued to claim the situation was improving during much of 2005, although a September 2005 report by the ICG suggested that the process of drafting a constitution had helped exacerbate the existing ethnic and sectarian divisions between Iraqis and serious problems continued through the formation of a new government in May and June of 2006.⁴⁵

The Ministry of Interior as a “Threat”

Much of the problem began at the top of the MOI. The appointment in May 2005 of Bayan Jabr, as the interim head of the Interior Ministry—which oversaw the nation’s police and specialized security units—exacerbated all these problems. Jabr was a prominent member of SCIRI, with close ties to Iran and to the Badr Brigade. It is unclear how many of the growing problems with the special security forces, police, prisons, and militias were really Jabr’s fault – he had limited power and freedom of action – but it is clear that no decisive action took place without major pressure on the minister by the US embassy and MNF-I.

This situation was made worse by severe understaffing the Coalition advisory effort to both the Ministry of Interior and the police, a problem that continued until at least early 2006. It was also made worse by the fact that control of the US advisory effort to the MOI was placed under the State Department while control of the advisory effort to the MOD was placed under the Department of Defense. This situation was corrected in October 2005, by putting the MOI under the Department of Defense, but this scarcely meant adequate staffing of the advisory effort, and problems in getting qualified civilian advisors continued to be severe.

Sunni politicians increasingly viewed Jabr’s position as particularly troubling during the efforts to form a new government, and blamed the ministry for a wave of Sunni-targeted kidnappings, tortures, and murders allegedly carried out by men wearing police uniforms. In late 2005, the Interior Ministry was found to be running secret detention centers in which more than 800 men and boys, mostly Sunnis, were held in horrific conditions. (The Iraqi Constitution only authorizes the Ministry of Justice to run prisons.)⁴⁶

By late 2005, US officials and military sources were complaining that the MOI and Minister Jabr were not informing them of some MOI and police operations and privately acknowledged that they had observed prisoner abuse. Commenting on the futility of filing reports against the incidents, one U.S. official equated it with “trying to put out a forest fire with a bucket of water.”⁴⁷

They expressed particular concern about the actions of the MOI's Maghawir or Fearless Warrior special commando units, and that they were carrying out illegal raids and killings. This 12,000-man force had a number of Sunni officers and had originally been formed under the authority of former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi. Since the new government was formed in April 2005 however, it had recruited larger numbers of new Shi'ite members. Its commander, General

Rashid Flaih Mohammed was reported to have acknowledged that the unit had had some problems. Sunni police commanders like Brigadier General Mohammed Ezzawi Hussein Alwann, commander of the Farook Brigade, were also purged from the MOI forces, along with junior officers.⁴⁸

The inability to distinguish clearly between different types of Iraqi forces, and imposters from real elements of Iraqi forces, became steadily more serious over time. During the winter of 2005 and 2006, body dumps became a favored tactic for both insurgents and militias. Although this trend existed long before the February 22 Askariya bombing, it increased thereafter and became part of the cyclical sectarian violence carried out by Shi'ites and Sunnis. It would be almost impossible to catalogue all of the discoveries, but finding ten to twenty corpses at one site was not uncommon and each day usually resulted in at least one "body dump" being reported. For example, in the period from March 7 until March 21, over 191 bodies were found. On one day in May, it was reported that 51 bodies were found in Baghdad alone. A health official in Baghdad said that there were over 2,500 murders in the capital since the February bombing, excluding mass-casualty bombings.⁴⁹

Efforts did go on, however, to improve the situation. By the late spring of 2006, the Iraqi government and its Coalition partners had taken a number of steps to promote respect for human rights within the MOI:⁵⁰

Iraqi police recruits receive 32 hours of human rights and rule of law training during the 10-week police basic training program. At the 3-week-long Transition Integration Program, in-service personnel receive 20 hours of human rights and rule of law training. National Police Forces receive 9-15 hours of human rights training during their 6-week courses. Additionally, throughout the country there are numerous programs to train existing MOI security forces in human rights standards, such as embedding civilian advisors and military police into Iraqi police stations.

The fact that many of the MOI forces had become associated with Shi'ite and Kurdish attacks on Sunnis during this period presented another kind of problem. On May 2006, Senior Iraqi leaders were preparing a major restructuring of Baghdad's security brigades that would place all police officers and paramilitary soldiers under a single commander and in one uniform. The move came as part of a wider effort to curtail the sectarian violence that was ravaging the city.⁵¹ The one reassuring note was that Sunni Muslims continued to join the security forces in large numbers, a possible sign of success in the effort to include people of Iraq's various religious factions into the military.⁵²

While the US government helped the Iraqi government establish an abuse complaint process system that involved the Inspector General, Internal Affairs, and the Public Affairs Office, the MOI still did not have the ability to police itself and eradicate human rights abuses. Human rights violations were particularly egregious at detention centers where there are no places to shower, pray, or prepare food and where plumbing and electrical systems are substandard. The Joint Iraqi Inspection Committee, comprised of Iraqi Inspectors General from various ministries with the support of the US Embassy and MNF-I, continued its investigation of these detention centers as of spring 2006.

Real versus Authorized Strength

The actual strength and force goals for the MOI forces, as of mid-2006, are shown in **Figure 3**. Estimating the actual strength of MOI forces was, a major problem. U.S. and Iraqi commanders

had long criticized the policy whereby Iraqi soldiers could leave their units whenever they want to. The Iraqi army does not require its soldiers to sign contracts, so soldiers treat enlistments as temporary jobs. This policy was partially responsible for draining Iraqi ranks to confront the insurgency by as much as 30 to 50 percent.⁵³

Active recruiting by the militias presented a growing problem, although many who chose the Militia's over the national army and police scarcely did so out of religious conviction. In violence prone areas where few jobs are available, young males often have reasons and incentives such as security, money and general wellbeing to join the militias over the state-run forces. As on such case summed up, the offer by the Mahdi Militia was "an attractive package." Not only did it offer a greater salary, but the organization also promised to take care of his family if something were to happen to him.

Figure 3: The Manpower of Iraq's Ministry of Interior Forces Before Their Mid-2006 Reorganization

Growth in Manpower: January 4, 2006 vs. May 31, 2006

January 4, 2006		May 31, 2006	
COMPONENT	TRAINED & EQUIPPED	COMPONENT	TRAINED & EQUIPPED
POLICE	~ 77,500	POLICE	~103,400
HIGHWAY PATROL		HIGHWAY PATROL	
OTHER MOI FORCES	~40,500	OTHER MOI FORCES	~44,300
TOTAL	~118,000*	TOTAL	~145,500

* Unauthorized absence personnel are included in these numbers.

Source: *Iraq Weekly Status Report*, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, US Department of State, January 4, 2006 and May 31, 2006 issues, p. 7.

Manning Realities vs. Goals February 2006

MOI Force	Manning as of Feb. 2006	Manning Goal as of Feb. 2006
Iraqi Highway Patrol	1,800	6,200 (August 2007)
Police Commandos	9,000	11,800 (December 2006)
Mechanized Police	1,500	NA
Public Order Police	8,100	10,600 (May 2006)
Emergency Response Unit	400	700 (June 2006)
Border Police	18,500	28,000 (May 2006)
Dignitary Protection	600	NA

Source: Adapted from U.S. Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, Report to Congress in Accordance with the Department of Defense Appropriations Act 2006 (Section 9010), February 2006, pp. 49-54.

The Status of Special Security Forces

The build-up of MOI special security and commando forces and units continued to be significant in 2006. The *New York Times* reported on January 16, 2006 that about 80,000 local police officers across Iraq were certified as trained and equipped, more than halfway toward the goal of 135,000 by early 2007.⁵⁴ As of February 20, 2006, Multinational Forces spokesman Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch said that Iraq's growing security forces planned and carried out more than a quarter of all counterinsurgency operations in Iraq in January, a total of 490 Iraqi-run missions, nearly a 50 percent increase over the September 2005 figure.⁵⁵ The Coalition also worked with the Iraqi Public Order Special Police who serve as a bridge between local police and the Iraqi army in handling terrorist and insurgency threats. Numbering about 9,000 as of February 2006, the public order police operated primarily as a light urban infantry.

As of May 2006, there were around 22,700 trained and equipped National Police (formerly known as "Special Forces" and Commandos) personnel, an increase of 4,000 since the previous DOD report to Congress in February 2006.⁵⁶

The 1st and 2nd National Police Divisions will reach 95% of equipping and authorized manning by June 2006 and will complete force generation by December 2006. The 1st National Police Mechanized Brigade continues to provide route security along Route Irish (from the International Zone to Baghdad International Airport), and is currently completing the fielding of 62 Armored Security Vehicles.

Force Size and Readiness

The growing size and readiness of the elite elements of these forces is shown in **Figure 4**. They presented the problem, however, that some elements were responsible for serious abuses of Shi'ites, and became a de facto part of the problem rather than the solution. Colonel Gordon Davis stated in February 2006, the composition of these forces was about 20 percent Sunni, many of whom are officers, and claimed this made it unlikely that the group could be infiltrated by vigilantes who carry out ethnic-based attacks. "There are a heck of a lot of strongly willed patriots amongst that group, and if they believed one of their own may be an insurgent or terrorist, then they would pick them out right away because that puts their own lives on the lines, as well as those of their families."⁵⁷

In an April 6, 2006 report to Congress, the DOD addressed the overall progress in the force structure of Iraq's Interior Ministry as follows:⁵⁸

The end-strength force structure for all Ministry of Interior forces is 195,000 trained and equipped personnel manning two division headquarters, nine brigade headquarters, twelve Public Order battalions, twelve Commando battalions, three mechanized battalions, and one Emergency Response Unit. The force structure plan is designed to enable a stable civil-security environment in which a prosperous economy and a democratic and representative government that respects and promotes human rights can evolve. As of March 20, 130,700 Ministry of Interior security personnel, or 67 percent of the authorized end strength of 195,000, have been trained and equipped. This includes 89,000 IPS personnel, as described in the next section, and 41,700 other Ministry of Interior forces, such as 27 National Police Force battalions and one Emergency Response Unit conducting operations with ten of these units "in the lead." There is no specific threshold for the number of Iraqi special police units that must be judged capable of operating independently or in the lead before U.S. force levels can be reduced.

The report went on to outline progress and outlook for training and equipping the Iraqi police forces.⁵⁹

The end-strength force structure of the IPS is 135,000 trained and equipped personnel. As of March 20, over 89,000 IPS, or 66 percent of the authorized end strength, have been trained and equipped, an increase of over 14,000 since the December 15, 2005 parliamentary election. These IPS personnel work alongside the 41,700 other Ministry of Interior forces described in the previous section.

The IPS is the primary civilian police organization in Iraq. Their mission is to enforce the law, safeguard the public, and provide internal security at the local level. The IPS is organized into patrol, station, and traffic sections in all major cities and provinces in Iraq and is responsible for providing security in more than 130 districts and at nearly 780 stations throughout Iraq. The scope of their responsibility demonstrates the critical need to ensure the development of professional, capable police forces that utilize modern policing techniques, follow the rule of law, and respect human rights. The Civilian Police Assistance Training Team (CPATT) works closely with the Ministry of Interior to improve the performance and professionalism of these forces. Police Transition Teams mentor and assist the IPS in a role similar to that of the Coalition Military Transition Teams, evaluating their progress and instituting the necessary procedures to continue development of a professional police force.

There is no specific threshold for the number of IPS that must be trained and equipped to maintain law and order and thereby enable U.S. force levels to be reduced.

Figure 4: Estimated Iraq's MOI National Police Force Capabilities Before the Spring 2006 Reorganization

COMPONENT	IRAQI UNITS ACTIVELY CONDUCTING COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS	
	Units fighting side-by-side with Coalition Forces*	Units in the lead with Coalition enablers or fully independent
Public Order Battalions	7	5
Mechanized Battalions	2	1
Police Commando Battalions	9	3
Emergency Response Unit	0	1

Note: * The numbers in this column may decrease as units are assessed into higher levels (i.e., "in the lead" or "fully independent").
Source: *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, Department of Defense report to Congress, February 2006, p. 37.

Steps Towards Reform

By early 2006, Ministry of Interior forces presented a serious problem, particularly among Iraq's Sunni population. So poor was the force's reputation that after the bombing of the Askariya shrine in Samarra on February 22, many Sunnis actually claimed that the perpetrators of the act were MOI forces seeking a pretext for civil war.⁶⁰ Among the forces that had gained the mixed reputation as among the most effective, but also the most feared were the MOI's special security forces and police commandos.

In early 2006, the White House released a fact sheet highlighting the importance of revamping image and procedures of MOI forces and elite units:

The Interior Ministry's Special Police are the most capable Iraqi police force...Many are professional and diverse, but recently some have been accused of committing abuses against Iraqi civilians. To stop abuses and increase professionalism, the Coalition is working with the Iraqi government to make adjustments in the way these forces are trained. Human rights and rule of law training is being increased. A new Police Ethics and Leadership Institute is being established in Baghdad. To improve capabilities, Iraqi Special Police battalions will be partnered with Coalition battalions so that American forces can work with and train their Iraqi counterparts.

Indeed, much of attention in spring 2006 was placed on re-orienting the special MOI forces toward being a more positive force, and reducing divisive behaviour and the interloping influences of sectarian actors.⁶¹ It was clear that major reforms were still needed. As a result, the Minister of the Interior merged the Police Commandos, the Public Order and Mechanized Police, and the Emergency Response Unit (ERU) to form the Iraqi National Police on April 1, 2006. Under the National Police Headquarters fall the 1st and 2nd National Police Divisions, the 1st

National Police Mechanized Brigade, and the ERU. The two police divisions were formed from the Commando Division and the Public Order Division.

The 1st National Police Mechanized Brigade remained a direct supporting unit, and the ERU, previously part of the MOI's Supporting Forces organization, was reassigned as a direct reporting unit to the National Police Headquarters. Two police academies—Camp Solidarity and Camp Dublin—also fell under the National Police Headquarters and provide specialized training and professional development. In addition, the Headquarters was formally recognized to provide command and control, manning, equipping, training, and sustainment for the National Police Forces.

The Emergency Response Unit (ERU) now reported directly to the National Police Force Headquarters and had more than 400 trained and equipped personnel assigned to it. The goal was for the ERU to become a highly trained, national-level unit similar to the hostage rescue team of the US FBI. ERU training consisted of two 4-week courses that included instruction in handling detainees, human rights, target reconnaissance, physical fitness, and mission planning. Selected personnel received training at the 8-week Explosive Ordnance Disposal course or the 6-week Intelligence/Surveillance course.

The Regular Police

The primary organization for local civilian policing in the MOI was the Iraqi Police Service (IPS). MNSTC-I's Civilian Police Assistance Training Team was working with the IPS to improve performance and professionalism, and Police Transition Teams were providing mentorship and development roles.

By early 2006, over 80,000 IPS personnel had been trained and equipped, an increase of 13,000 since October 2005. As of early 2006, MNSTC-I was projecting to complete force generation by February 2007.⁶²

Increases in Police Strength

As of spring 2006, MOI forces included the Iraqi Police Service (IPS) and national forces. The IPS consisted of patrol, traffic, station, and highway police assigned throughout Iraq's 18 provinces. National forces consisted of the National Police, the Department of Border enforcement, and the Center for Dignitary Protection.

As of March 2006, the MOI had integrated the former Iraqi Highway Patrol into the respective provincial police departments. This decreased the authorization of MOI forces to 188,000 trained and equipped personnel. The National Police had 28 battalions in the fight with 6 battalions having security lead for their areas of responsibility.

The end result was that the Coalition Police Assistance Training Team (CPATT) had trained and equipped approximately 101,200 Iraqi Police Service (IPS) personnel as of May 2006, an increase of 18,800 since the previous report. The IPS was organized into patrol, station, traffic, and highway patrol directorates across Iraq and was tasked with enforcing the law, safeguarding the public, and providing internal security at the local level. As of May 2006, the CPATT anticipated that it will have trained and equipped the total authorization of 135,000 personnel by December 2006. More than 225 Iraqi Police stations had been constructed and refurbished, 80

more than in February 2006. The CPATT projected that another 225 police stations would be completed by December 2006.

The "Year of the Police"

All of this progress, however, did not affect the fact that problems in the police and other MOI forces were so severe that the Iraqi government and MNF-I not only agreed to the reorganization discussed earlier, but that a comprehensive new approach was needed to training. All elements of the MOI forces needed better training and organization, but the regular police were so large that retraining them was a key challenge to the MOI, Iraqi government and MNF-I.

The fact that the training and overall readiness of the Iraqi National Police remained behind the army, and the presence of militia members or "death squads" operating within or in association with the forces caused the U.S. to elevate its efforts to make the police an effective fighting force and unofficially dub 2006 the "year of the police."

These problems President Bush identified these problems in a March speech. He proposed three solutions.

- First, to increase partnerships between U.S. and Iraqi battalions in order that Iraqi units cannot only learn tactical lessons but also that the U.S. forces can "teach them about the role of a professional police force in a democratic system" so that they can conduct their operations "without discrimination."⁶³
- Second, he called for further efforts by Iraqi officials in conjunction with their U.S. partners to identify and remove leaders within the police ranks who demonstrate loyalty to a militia. He claimed one success story in this area already. In December 2005, after receiving reports of abuses, the MOI dismissed the Brigade commander of the Second Public Order Brigade. His replacement subsequently removed more than 100 men with ties to militias.⁶⁴
- Third, to recruit a greater number of Sunni Arabs into what is seen by many as a predominately Shi'ite police force. President Bush noted that a basic training class that graduated in October 2005 was less than 1% Sunni. Although it is unclear how much progress has been made in diluting the Shi'ite majority within the ranks, Bush subsequently remarked that the class graduating in April 2006 "will include many more Sunni Arabs."⁶⁵

More than 200 police transition teams were established at the national, provincial, district, and local levels that provided Coalition oversight, mentorship, and training to the police forces. Moreover, the Iraqi Department of Homeland Security Customs and Border Patrol teams mentored MOI forces at points of entry, and the 38 National Police Transition Teams continue to support the development of the National Police units.

Ongoing Reform

The initiative led to the deployment of Coalition Police Assistance Training Teams (CPATTs), under MNSTC-I, to lead the MNF-I "Year of the Police" initiative, and partnering with MOI to plan, coordinate, and execute the necessary measures to develop the ministry. Training increasingly focused on leadership development with the Center for Ethics and Leadership initiative as well as efforts to change the Baghdad Police College from focusing on training basic police officers to developing Iraqi police officers. The MOI also improved its internal investigative capability with the Internal Affairs section graduating another group of students to bring the total number of trained Internal Affairs specialists to 25 as of May 2006.

Following the April 1, 2006 reorganization, National Police recruits were to finish basic training programs at the National Police Force Training Academies. Training focused on leader

development and “train the trainer” courses to facilitate the transition to Iraqi lead in all areas. The training academy in northern Baghdad accommodated 300-500 students for six weeks of intense training in weapons qualification, urban patrolling techniques, unarmed combat apprehension, use of force, human rights and ethics in policing, introduction to Iraqi law, vehicle checkpoints, and improvised explosive device characteristics and recognition.

Also effective April 1, 2006, National Police Transition Teams (NPTTs) were reassigned to MNC-I to ensure an integrated approach to command and control for the transition teams. This was meant to help ensure a more synchronized effort between Iraqi forces and operational Coalition units. NPTTs provide daily mentorship to the National Police forces in the field to help develop leadership, plan and execute operations, and otherwise professionalize the force, while emphasizing the importance of human rights and the rule of law.

Equipment and Training

The Iraqi Police Service (IPS) was equipped with AK-47s, PKCs, Glock pistols, individual body armor, high frequency radios, small pick-ups, mid-size SUVs, and medium pick-ups. The IPS’s logistics capabilities, especially in regard to vehicle maintenance, continued to be a concern, although progress has been made in the effective distribution and improved accountability of supplies and equipment. Forces in the nine key cities are currently approached 80% of their authorized key pacing items.

Deliveries, however, were even lighter than for the regular forces. Equipment deliveries for all MOI forces in the final quarter of 2005 included the following.⁶⁶

- More than 10,000 AK-47 rifles
- 16,000 pistols
- 800 light and medium machine guns
- 4,000 sets of individual body armor
- 700 Kevlar helmets
- More than 65,000 cold weather jackets

Iraqi police training continued at the Jordan International Police Training Center (JIPTC) and at the Baghdad Police College (BPC) while smaller regional academies complemented these training initiatives. The JIPTC accommodates around 1,500 students per class while the BPC accommodates around 1,000. The 10-week basic course covers the rule of law, human rights, and policing skills in a high threat environment. Since the previous report, more than 20,000 police personnel have received specialized training on diverse subjects, including interrogation procedures and counter-terrorism investigations. Leadership development remained on track to meet the December 2006 goal of having all required officers and NCOs trained.

Dealing With Divided Loyalties

Reorganization and retraining still left open the question of divided loyalties. By the spring of 2006, a recent background check by Iraqi police investigators found more than 5,000 police officers with records for crimes that included attacks on American troops. The results pointed to questions over the initial vetting process for creating the force, as well as continuing problems of

quality. A 2006 internal police survey conducted northeast of Baghdad found that 75 percent of respondents did not trust the police enough to tip them off to insurgent activity.

In response to these concerns, the Pentagon announced it was sending 3,000 police trainers across the country in 2006 in an attempt to remake the force, and to have a competent functional force of 190,000 police officers by early 2007.⁶⁷ According to Army Col. Rob Barham, this goal was to follow on a shorter-term goal of 135,000 officers patrolling in all 18 Iraqi provinces by the end of 2006.⁶⁸

Facility Construction

As of spring 2006, work on the Baghdad Police College (formerly the Baghdad Public Safety Training Academy) continued. The project was 80% complete and was expected to be finished by July 2006. Renovations on the Al-Zab Courthouse in Kirkuk, which began in October 2005, were 52% complete by April, with an estimated completion date of mid-August 2006.

Progress on the Nassriya correctional facility was 28% complete, and had been hampered due to inadequate workforce levels and security concerns at the site. The facility was expected to be completed in August 2006, and was slated to have a capacity of at least 800 beds, with the possibility of an additional 400 beds.

By April, construction was also completed on the following military facilities:⁶⁹

- Camp India Base, which will support 2,500 Iraqi soldiers in the 4th Brigade of the 1st Division
- Samawah, which will support 750 Iraqi soldiers in the 2nd Brigade of the 10th Division
- Naiad, which will support 250 Iraqi soldiers in the 1st Brigade Headquarters of the 8th Division

Department of Border Enforcement

Progress also occurred in creating an effective Border Police, a step that was hoped to help stem the infiltration of foreign fighters, smugglers, and Iranian agents. By early 2006, more than 18,500 border police had been trained and equipped, up by 1,500 since the last yearly quarter of 2005, but lagging the goal of 24,000 by the December 15 election. While three border force academies were operation, delays in construction at the Department of Border Enforcement was blamed for the slow progress of bringing forces online. Construction had been delayed due to weather, remote location, restricted movement, and contractor delays.

By May 2006, the Department of Border Enforcement (DBE) numbered approximately 21,000 trained and equipped personnel, an increase of 2,300 since February 2006. These forces were organized into 5 regions, 12 brigades, and 38 battalions.

Coalition Border Transition Teams (BTTs)

Members of the 10 to 11-man Coalition Border Transition Teams (BTTs) were trained in various specialties, including logistics and communications, and provided valuable mentorship and support for border force commanders in the areas of personnel management, intelligence, operations, budgeting equipment accountability, and maintenance. The number of BTTs was increased from 15 to more than 25 as part of the “Year of the Police” initiative.

These Coalition Border Transition Teams served as mentors for the border security units, assisting in areas such as personnel management, intelligence, operations, budgeting, and

equipment accountability/maintenance. Three academies with a capacity of 800 students each were operational, as well.

Such efforts had limits. Although the lack of border control helped allow the passage foreign fighters and supplies, many came through legal border crossings and the insurgency was not dependent on smuggling or foreign volunteers. In fact, Iranian pilgrims were the most frequently intercepted trespassers. Lt. Gen. Peter Chiarelli stated, "There is still a lot going over the border...I don't know if you can ever stop it completely."⁷⁰

Border Forces Equipment and Training

During a tour of two of the 258 border posts established by Coalition forces, Lt. Gen. Peter Chiarelli said that Iraqi border forces were getting "better and better every single day." Yet, he noted that these forces needed better pay and equipment. Some forts lack radios and other standard communication equipment and a few do not even have enough gas on hand to conduct patrols.⁷¹

The border forces had a force generation and distribution plan calling for the delivery of 85% of the key equipment by summer 2006. Standard organization equipment includes small and medium pick-up trucks; mid-size SUVs, generators; and mobile, base, and hand-held radios. Border forces also required personal equipment such as AK-47s, medium machine guns, and individual body armor.

Three DBE academies in al-Kut, Basra, and Sulamaniyah, each with a capacity of approximately 800, were utilized for training border patrol students. Students in the Iraqi Border Patrol (IBP) Basic Training Course received instruction in law enforcement, human relations, human rights, weapons qualification, combat life saving, vehicle searches, Iraqi border law, arrest and detainee procedures, and small unit patrolling. The curriculum was to be updated to include specialized instruction in first aid, communications, maintenance, and food preparation. After completing the three week core curriculum, recruits were then tracked according to these four specialties.

The DBE continued to make progress in designating standard organizations, delineating responsibilities, and developing detailed policies and procedures for land Points of Entry (POE). As of May 2006, there were 14 land POEs, and 13 of these were functional. Making significant changes in the operation of POEs is difficult because multiple ministries are involved.

Uncertain Progress in Facilities

The border forces were to man 258 border forts. As of May 2006, 244 border posts and forts had been completed, an increase of 74 since February 2006. Layered security effort included border patrols by DBE units, Iraqi Army checkpoints, and Coalition forces.

This progress was, however, sometimes more apparent than real. In spring 2006, the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) conducted ground project surveys of 22 border forts located along the Iraq-Iran border. Progress on the completion of these projects was described as thus:⁷²

At the time of the ground survey, 17 were complete or near complete and functional. However, only 7 of the 17 border forts had perimeter security systems, gates, berms, or walls installed. Concrete quality was sometimes poor, and inconsistent surfaces in concrete and plaster finishing were common in the buildings and other structures. Numerous sites lacked retaining walls to prevent degradation of the embankments created by site leveling.

Based on discussions with local personnel at the border forts at the time of the site visits, SIGIR found that the day-to-day users -- the border police -- were unaware of a plan for maintenance and logistical support for the border posts, and received little if any training in maintaining the generator and septic systems. Logistical needs, such as fuel and water delivery, were lacking at some border posts. The generators lacked protection from drifting snow, and some outdoor electrical fixtures lacked proper insulation against rainwater. SIGIR requested copies of contract documents for the remaining five border forts included in our surveys; however, the MNSTC-I was unable to identify or locate the contract(s) for these projects. As a result, SIGIR was unable to determine the project objectives, SOW, or design specifications.

All five of these border forts were of poor quality construction and showed no signs of any recent maintenance. Although small generators were located at the five border forts, fuel storage was not available. Electrical and water systems were consistently either inoperable or needed repair.

Other Developments in Border Enforcement

On May 27, 2006, on the second day of his visit to Iraq, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said that Iran and Iraq had agreed to form a joint commission to oversee border issues, and that its primary task would be to “block saboteurs” crossing the 700-mile border. Mottaki went on to say that improved border controls would be part of a wider effort to build close ties between the countries, including \$1 billion in Iranian economic assistance to Shi’ite and Kurdish areas of Iraq.⁷³

Facilities Protection Forces, Private Security Personnel and “Ministry Armies”

Iraq and the MNF-I also had problems with a wide range of lighter forces, many of which were corrupt, ineffective, and had elements that either supported the insurgency or rouge Shi’ite operations

The Facilities Protection Services

L. Paul Bremer, former head of the CPA, established the FPS in September 2003 to free American troops from guarding Iraqi government property and to prevent the kind of looting that erupted with the entry of US forces and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. Bremer’s order put the FPS under the command and pay of the ministries they protected, not of the interior and defense ministries, which handle the rest of Iraq’s security forces. The order also allowed private security firms to handle the contracting of FPS guards for the ministries.⁷⁴

US and Interior Ministry officials increasingly described the FPS units as militias that answer only to the ministry or private security firm that employs it. US officials have acknowledged that they have no more control over the FPS than the Interior Ministry does. “Negative. None. Zero,” said Lt. Col. Michael J. Negard, a spokesman for the US training of Iraqi forces. Even Interior Ministry Bayan Jabr said in April 2006 that the FPS was “out of control.”⁷⁵

On May 14, 2006, Ellen Knickmeyer reported in the *Washington Post* that Iraq’s Interior Ministry had begun negotiations to bring central authority to the Facilities Protection Service (FPS), a unit of 4,000 building guards that US officials say has become the new government’s largest paramilitary force, with 145,000 armed men and no central command, oversight or paymaster.

On May 6th, the private security companies that employ the FPS members agreed to several Interior Ministry proposals intended to bring some measure of central control and oversight to

the paramilitary units. The ministry will issue badges and distinctive seals for FPS vehicles and supervise FPS weapons. Agents of the security companies and the ministry clarified that FPS members were liable for prosecution for any crimes. The security companies also agreed to bring the FPS under ministry supervision, but General Raad al-Tamimi of the Interior Ministry did not disclose any details.⁷⁶

The Infrastructure Protection Forces

The various infrastructure protection Forces were placed under the MoD, but were much lower quality forces than the regular military, the MOI security forces, and many of the police. In many cases, they were corrupt, subject to insurgent penetration, and tied to various sects, ethnic groups, and tribes.

While Prime Minister Maliki referred to such forces as having some 150,000 men in May 2006, many were phantom employees, deserters, or virtually inactive. Such units also often sold their uniforms, weapons, and equipment. They also generally reported in de facto terms to another ministry, even when they were formally under the control of the Ministry of Defense.

The two key entities responsible for the security of Iraq's oil infrastructure in spring 2006 were the Strategic Infrastructure Battalions (SIBs) and the Oil Protection Force (OPF). The electric infrastructure is protected by the Electric Power Security Service (EPSS).

- The SIBs fielded more than 3,400 trained personnel to guard Iraq's critical oil infrastructure, particularly the vast network of pipelines, as of April.
- The OPF, managed by the Ministry of Oil, was responsible for guarding all other Iraqi oil industry assets and facilities.

As reported by SIGIR's April 2006 Report to Congress, the government formed the SIBs to improve infrastructure security. The SIBs were part of the Ministry of Defense, and four had completed basic training at the time of the report. They were currently conducting security operations to protect oil pipelines and facilities critical to the domestic market and export industry. MNSTC-I equipped the SIBs and helped the Ministry of Defense develop institutional expertise and tradecraft. Developments reported by SIGIR included the following:

More than 3,400 soldiers have completed training in this area, and training for a second group has already begun. Attacks on Iraq's infrastructure account for only a small portion of total attacks. According to DoD, attacks on infrastructure during this quarter are down by 60%. But, combined with other variables, attacks on critical infrastructure are still expected to have a significant impact on:

- oil and fuel production
- revenues derived from crude exports

Additionally, although the number of infrastructure attacks has recently decreased, the complexity of the attacks has increased: insurgents have become more proficient at targeting critical infrastructure nodes, as well as intimidating personnel who deliver essential services.

These forces had serious problems, however, and were generally ineffective and could not be trusted. Problems also existed, however. In early March 2006, DOS reported that Iraqi police had arrested several SIB guards on suspicion of aiding insurgents in targeting the oil pipeline system. This was the second recent incident in which SIB personnel were arrested in connection with insurgent plots against the oil pipeline infrastructure.⁷⁷

Other Non Mod/MOI Paramilitary Elements

The security personnel assigned specifically to the various ministries within the Iraqi Government added another 145,000 armed personnel. The Oil Ministry, for example, maintained about 20,000 troops to protect refineries and other parts of the country's oil infrastructure. Another example was the Facilities Protection Service (FPS), established in 2003 as a 4,000-man force charged with protecting crucial parts of Iraqi utilities, such as power plants and oil refineries. Between August 2004 and January 2005, that force expanded 15-fold to 60,000 personnel. A contributing factor to the expansion of the force was the US need to free up US troops for combat. Still, some cautioned that the expansion only created another competing militia, whose troops' loyalties lied only with the ministry that paid them.

In April 2006, Interior Minister Bhan Jabr accused the Facilities Protection Service (FPS) of carrying out some of the killings largely attributed to death squads operating within MOI forces.⁷⁸ That same month, oversight of expansion and training of these forces raised further uncertainty. An inspector general was assigned to audit the \$147 million US-overseen FPS program. The report reflected a lack of transparency:⁷⁹

...the auditors were never able to determine basic facts like how many Iraqis were trained, how many weapons were purchased and where much of the equipment ended up.

Of 21,000 guards who were supposed to be trained to protect oil equipment, for example, probably only about 11,000 received the training, the report said. And of 9,792 automatic rifles purchased for those guards, auditors were able to track just 3,015.

The Americans exercise no oversight over the F.P.S., nor does any central authority in the Iraqi government.

Intelligence

Iraqi intelligence was still in development at the military and civilian level in mid-2006. Some independent units were emerging, but most operations were under de facto Coalition tutelage or control.

Iraq's Continuing Strategic Challenges

In addition to building effective Iraqi security forces, Iraq faces many strategic challenges. As noted earlier, Iraq's external strategic challenges are many, but since 2003, the nation has been dealing with many forces that are pulling it apart. The discussion of stability in Iraq has largely focused on the insurgency and their ability to inflict death and destruction, but the violence is one element of the puzzle—albeit an important element.

Iraq is a nation with a complex history, which presides in the most strategically important region in the world. In an era of asymmetric warfare and terrorism is threatening international security, energy security, and the threat of a “clash of civilizations,” the future of Iraq will have large implications on regional stability and global security. Predicting these implications, however, is equally a useless exercise of imagination.

Many have attempted to predict the future outcome of Iraq, wanted to preempt it through dividing Iraq into three states, or recommending an immediate withdrawal of foreign troops from Iraq. In order, however, to understand Iraq and the prospect of stability in the foreseeable future,

one must understand the forces at play, and that strategic challenges facing Iraq in the short to medium-term. The following are key forces that are pulling Iraq apart and that must be dealt with in order to insure stability in the coming years:

- **The risk of civil war:** Sectarian violence has been the driving force behind the risk of igniting a civil war between Iraq's key factions. Most of the violence has been directed by neo-Salafist elements led by al-Qa'ida against Shi'ites. Iraq's political leaders have urged calm in the face of violence, but emotions run high particularly when the violence is directed against religious gathering and/or shrines. Shi'ites militia groups such as Al-Mahdi army and the Bader Brigade have also been accused of carrying "revenge" killing against Sunnis. The most dangerous claims have been the infiltration of Shi'ite militia leaders either at the political level in the Ministry of Interior or at the soldier level in Iraq's security forces. Finally, the Kurdish question may have not spurred the same level of violence that the Sunni-Shi'ite tensions have, but it is all too clear that any attempt by the Kurds to demand autonomy will be met by resistance by both the Sunnis and the Shi'ites, and can lead to further violence and enhance the threat of fragmentation in Iraq.
- **Defeating the insurgency:** As will be discussed in details, characterizing the Iraqi insurgency or defining its composition is not easy. Most estimates, however, show that the insurgency is largely fueled by Sunnis who are dissatisfied by losing power, the Shi'ites control of the government, the occupation by U.S. forces, and by the overall economic and political situation in Iraq. In addition, there are other elements in the insurgency—particularly those led by al-Qai'da in Iraq—that have attacked and urged more attacks against Shi'ites' holy sites, civilians, and political leaders. Finally, there are the former regime elements that are largely driven by loss of power, and aim for a return of the Ba'ath regime to power.
- **Creating effective internal security armed forces:** For immediate tactical or strategic success against the insurgency, the United States must continue to build Iraq's internal security, paramilitary, and military forces. The focus, however, must be on quality and not quantity. In addition to the usual criteria for insuring force effectiveness, Iraqi security forces have suffered from the threat of infiltration by both Sunni insurgents as well as Shi'ite militias. This has driven many Iraqis, particularly Sunnis, to mistrust Iraq's security forces and has been a contentious point at the political as well as at the tactical level across sectarian lines. Loyalty cannot be insured at the best trained forces, but abuses by Ministry of Interior forces of Sunnis go to the heart of chance of building force cohesion. In addition, Iraqi security and armed forces have suffered from direct attacks by insurgents groups. Force protection is still a problem for many of the Iraqi units, and it may take time before they are able to act interpedently.
- **Relations with neighboring states:** Iraq has not had the best of relations with its neighbors. As noted earlier, Iraq fought two major wars with its neighbors, Iran and Kuwait, and has had hostile relations to its other Gulf States, Jordan, and Syria. Since the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime, Iraqis as well as coalition officials have accused Iraq's neighboring states of interfering in Iraq's internal affairs. In the case of Iran, it has been accused of supporting Shi'ite militias as well as elements of the insurgency that are fighting against U.S. forces. This has prompted regional officials to accuse Iran of wanting to remake the new Iraq in its own image—a Shi'ite Islamic Republic. This has also forced many Sunnis to accuse Iraqi Shi'ites of working for Iran. However, in the case of Syria, U.S. and Iraqi officials have accused the Syrian government of facilitating the travel of foreign fighters into Iraq. Most of these fighters have joined neo-Salafist groups, namely al-Qa'ida in Iraq, and have been accused of being behind most of the "spectacular" suicide bombings.
- **Establishing viable political institutions:** Since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, the political divisions were drawn across sectarian lines. These divisions have delayed writing key provision of the constitutions particularly the role of religion, federalism, and the division of oil revenues. In addition, Sunnis boycotted the first election because they felt underrepresented, which resulted in a win to religious Shi'ite and nationalist Kurdish groups to score major wins. While Sunnis voted in larger numbers in the proceeding two elections, the challenge for Iraq is not in holding elections, but in establishing sustainable political institutions that transcend sectarian divisions. This includes removing the sense of sectarian favoritism in key ministries such as the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Oil. In addition, it means establishing independent judicial system that is seen fair by all factions. Furthermore, with time, it requires nurturing a culture of citizen participation that is not based on ethnicity, rather on political

ideology that is based on what is best for the citizens of Iraq. Iraq, however, is far from that point, and the political challenge is as important to the future of Iraq as is any counterinsurgency strategy.

- **Building its economy:** Another important factor that is central to securing Iraq's future is the challenge the Iraqi government is facing in building a free-market economy. Due to the importance of oil revenues to Iraq's economy and the over centralization policies of Saddam Hussein's regime, Iraq has never had a viable private sector and has never had a real stable currency. Iraq has always dealt with unemployment and underemployment, but the impact of 12 years of economic sanctions and the mismanagement of the reconstruction and aid efforts by the United States have left a large fraction of the Iraqi population unemployed. Perhaps the most prominent amongst these groups are those who were employed by Iraq's armed forces, who were fired due to the CPA's de-Ba'athification efforts. There are also discrepancies in the levels of developments across different regions of Iraq. Under Saddam Hussein, Sunni area witnessed large investment in infrastructure, while the Kurdish and Shi'ite areas saw minimum investment. The Kurdish region, however, has benefited from the semi-autonomy it enjoyed during the 1990s and experienced an inflow of investment and economic development. Following the invasion, due to the relative calmness of the southern and the northern regions of Iraq, Shi'ites and Kurdish region have seen more benefit from Iraq's reconstruction compared to the Sunnis regions—albeit on a low scale.
- **Upgrading its energy infrastructure:** Realistically speaking, no economic development of reform of Iraq can be complete without large investment and upgrade in Iraq's oil sector. Iraq has suffered from the lack of any meaningful investment since the early 1980s due to mismanagement by the regime, political uncertainties, security risks, and economic sanctions. Iraq's oil fields are using technologies that are outdated, its oil workers have not been trained in industry best practices, and its downstream and upstream management as well as production facilities are worn out. The U.S. reconstruction efforts have not even begun to address these problems. Iraq's economy will likely to continue to depend on its oil revenues, but its production capacity has not kept up either with regional standards or with Iraq's economic and fiscal needs. For the Iraqi government of the coalition to have any success in dealing with Iraq's economic development problems, these problems in its energy sector must be dealt with.

As this list make all too clear, Iraq's future largely depends on the Iraqi government ability to deal with the sectarian divisions, insure the nation's sovereignty, and insuring Iraq's long-term stability. None of this, however, is possible without sound economic, political, and security policy that aims at dealing the totality of Iraq's strategic challenges.

Socioeconomic Challenges

Iraq has a long history of economic stagnation despite its vast oil resources. The high oil revenues following the 1970s boom were mismanaged and directed toward defense spending by Saddam Hussein. During the Iran-Iraq War, Iraq's military expenditures reached nearly half of its GNP. According the U.S. Department of States, Iraq's defense spending as a percentage of GNP was 41.2 percent in 1985, 54.8 percent in 1986, 54.5 percent in 1987, 57.5 percent in 1988, 41.1 percent in 1989, 61.3 percent in 1990, 12.5 percent in 1991, and approximately 4.9-9.7 percent throughout the rest of the 1990s.⁸⁰ In the years before the U.S. invasion in 2003, Iraq was estimated to have spent 10 percent of its GNP on defense.⁸¹

Iraq's high levels of defense spending diverted much needed investment from social and economic development programs, which have suffered for many years from under investment. High defense spending is only one of the reasons behind Iraq's economic stagnation. Iraq's economy has also suffered from many years of fiscal mismanagements, oil crashes, economic sanction, two major wars, and not to mention the U.S. invasion and the subsequent instability and security.

The importance of dealing with these economic challenges, however, goes beyond their economic values. The insurgency in Iraq is partially fueled by the dissatisfaction of the Iraqi

population—particularly in the Sunni areas. In addition, it is all too clear that communities that are well-off economically would not risk joining the insurgency since they have a lot to lose. On the other hand, insurgent groups—of all stripes—recruit from unemployed Iraqis who do not see any hope for the future, and who blame the lack of economic and job opportunities on the Iraqi government and the occupation of U.S. forces and the failure of the post-conflict reconstruction efforts.

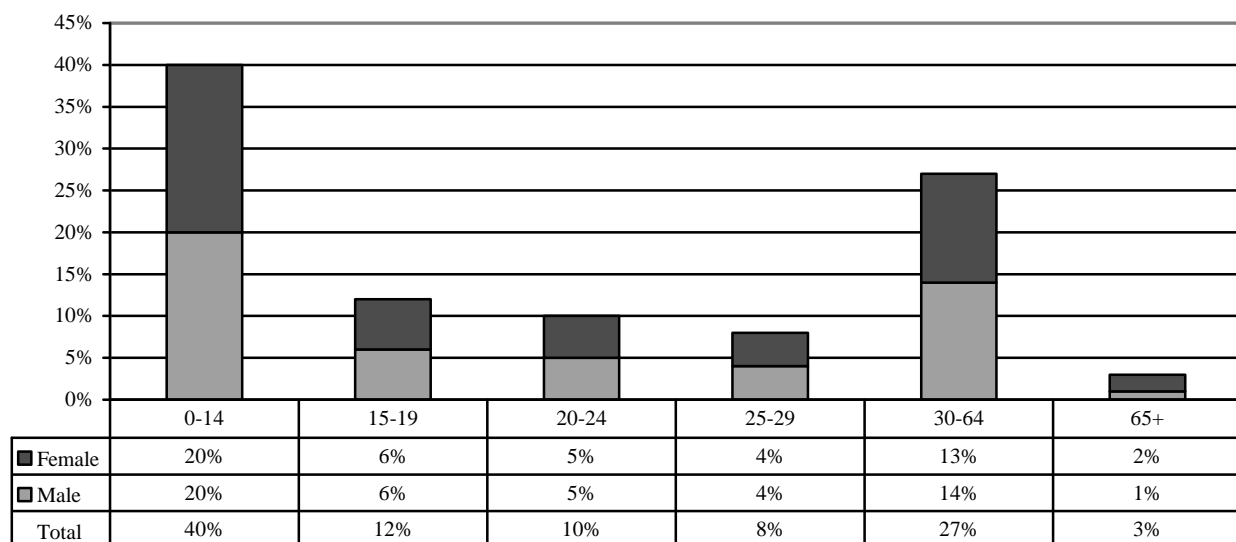
Going forward, to understand the economic challenge Iraq faces, the following are the key areas that the Iraqi government must deal with in order to insure economic growth and sustainable development:

- **High unemployment rates:** CIA estimates that Iraq's unemployment rate is around 25-30 percent.⁸² This estimate, however, is not based on a survey but rather on a "guesstimate." In fact, no one really knows the actual Iraqi labor force and there are no meaningful ways to conduct accurate surveys of the labor force, given the security situation in Iraq. What is clear, however, is that estimates of how large the unemployment differ, but at least a third of Iraq's labor force is considered unemployed and some estimate it as high as 60 percent. Regardless of the exact number, a large number of Iraqis unemployed, and the Iraqi government must find ways to stimulate the labor market, provide job opportunities for its youth, and must deal with its former military personnel who were let go by the deBathification campaign. There are no simple ways to deal with it, and Iraq is not alone in the Middle East in suffering from high unemployment, but the Iraqi government has little choice but to find a meaningful and practical solution.
- **Reliance on oil revenues and the public sector:** Part of the problem Iraq faces in creating employment opportunities is the lack of a vibrant private sector. Historically the number one employer in Iraq was the government, which heavily relied on oil revenues, which are estimated to be 95 percent of its export earnings. In addition, the government does not have any meaningful way to impose, reinforce, or collect tax revenues. Due to the volatility of the global oil market and the uncertainty regarding Iraq's oil production levels, Iraq's economic development has been inconsistent. The government must find alternatives to oil, and must diversify its sources of revenues. But there is no replacement to a vibrant private sector that empowers the population, and that acts as a natural distributor of wealth.
- **Budgetary transparencies:** Most of the Gulf States and for that matter most of the developing world suffers from a lack of transparency in its budgetary process. This has encouraged corruption or at the least the perception thereof. Many Iraqi officials have complained about the plague of corruption in Iraq. The scrutiny has focused on many agencies in Iraq, but particularly the Ministry of Oil. Part of instilling confidence in the government is reassuring the public that oil revenues are not misused and stolen. Once again, there are no easy answers to this problem, but an honest effort has to be made to provide reporting, and to give the Iraqi parliament an oversight over the use of money.
- **Establishing a stable currency:** The Iraqi Dinar has been volatile for decades. The sanctions caused major devaluation of the currency and ongoing inflationary pressures as well as massive current account deficits have caused the Dinar's future to be cloaked with uncertainty. This may be a minor problem in the short-term, but recent history is full of examples when minor inflations and currency devaluation have caused major economic meltdowns. A policy of repatriating Iraqi capital from the West, paying the down foreign debt, inviting foreign investment, and curbing down on inflationary tendencies can help to stop further currency crashes and improving the standards of living in Iraq.

These economic challenges are compounded by other social demographic problems. As is the case with its other Gulf neighbors, Iraq faces a youth explosion. As **Figure 5** shows, approximately 40 percent of Iraq's population is under the age of 14, and more than half (52 percent) are under the age of 20. In addition, the figure shows that approximately 45 percent of Iraq's population is of working age. This distribution does not show the problem Iraq faces in its labor market, but it also shows the difficulty it will face in the foreseeable future.

According to UN population estimates, Iraq has experienced major population growth since the 1950s. Iraq's population was estimated to be 5.34 millions in 1950, 7.33 millions in 1960, 10.11 million in 1970, 14.09 million in 1980, 18.52 million in 1990, 25.08 million in 2000, and 28.81 million in 2005. The same trends are also expected to continue. The UN projects Iraq's population to grow to 32.53 million in 2010, 40.52 million in 2020, 48.80 million in 2030, 56.69 million 2040, and 63.69 million in 2050.⁸³

Figure 5: Iraq's Demographic Distribution, 2006



Source: IISS, *Military Balance 2005-2006*.

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

Insurgents had carried out more than 300 attacks on Iraqi oil facilities between March 2003 and January 2006. An estimate by Robert Mullen indicates that there were close to 500 and perhaps as many as 600-700. His breakdown of the number of attacks was: pipelines, 398; refineries, 36; oil wells, 18; tanker trucks, 30; oil train, 1; storage tanks 4; and 1 tank farm. In addition, there were at least sixty-four incidents in which the victims were related to Iraq's petroleum sector, ranging from high ranking persons in the Oil Ministry to oil workers at refineries, pipelines, and elsewhere in the sector, to contract, military, police, and tribal security people. The number killed in these directed attacks reached at least 100.⁸⁴

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

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Oil production dropped by 8 percent in 2005, and pipeline shipments through the Iraqi northern pipeline to Ceyan in Turkey dropped from 800,000 barrels per day before the war to an average of 40,000 barrels per day in 2005. In July 2005, Iraqi officials estimated that insurgent attacks had already cost Iraq some \$11 billion. They had kept Iraqi oil production from approaching the 3 million barrel a day goal in 2005 goal that the Coalition had set after the fall of Saddam Hussein, and production had dropped from pre-war levels of around 2.5 million barrels a day to an average of 1.83 million barrels a day in 2005, and a level of only 1.57 million barrels a day in December 2005.⁸⁵ These successes have major impact in a country where 94 percent of the government's direct income now comes from oil exports.

The impact of such attacks has been compounded by the ability of insurgents -- and Iraqi officials and civilians -- to steal oil and fuel. The *New York Times* has quoted Ali Allawi, Iraq's finance minister, as estimating that insurgents were taking some 40 percent to 50 percent of all oil-smuggling profits in the country, and had infiltrated senior management positions at the major northern refinery in Baji: "It's gone beyond Nigeria levels now where it really threatens national security...The insurgents are involved at all levels." The *Times* also quoted an unidentified US official as saying that, "It's clear that corruption funds the insurgency, so there you have a very real threat to the new state...Corruption really has the potential of undercutting the growth potential here." The former oil minister, Ibrahim Bahr al-Ulum, had said earlier in 2005, "oil and fuel smuggling networks have grown into a dangerous mafia threatening the lives of those in charge of fighting corruption."⁸⁶

An Aging Energy Sector

Iraqi oil fields have been damaged from overproduction and water encroachment at various times ever since the Iran-Iraq War. This was initially believed to be relatively simple to fix. Stemming Iraq's waterflood problems could increase production by anywhere from 20 to 50 percent, and Improved Oil Recovery (IOR) techniques and Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR) methods have the ability to increase recoveries a further 10-15 percent beyond those due to waterflood. Using a conservative estimate of a 10-15 percent increase from waterflood recovery and 1-6 percent increase from EOR methods, Iraq would still incur a total rise of 50 to 70 billion barrels of recoverable reserves.⁸⁷

The UN found that Saddam Hussein demanded high production at a time that UN economic sanctions precluded Iraq from acquiring the sophisticated computer-modeling equipment and technology required to manage older reservoirs properly. Oil experts working for the UN estimated that some reservoirs in southern Iraq "may only have ultimate recoveries of between 15 percent and 25 percent of the total oil" in the field, as compared with an industry norm of 35 to 60 percent.

The *New York Times* reported the following views of three oil exports about the progress in Iraq's oil industry and the uncertainty it is facing:⁸⁸

- Maury Vasilev, senior vice president of PetroAlliance Services, a Russian oil-field company that held discussions with Iraq's Oil Ministry in 2000, concluded that. "Kirkuk was of particular concern and particular urgency because of the water content in the wells...there was a question of how much oil they could recover."
- Fadhil Chalabi, a former top Iraqi oil official, claimed in the summer of 2003 that Kirkuk's expected recovery rate had dropped from 30 percent to 15 percent. The *Times* also quote an unnamed American oil

executive as saying in November 2003 that Iraqi engineers told him that they were now expecting recovery rates of 9 percent in Kirkuk and 12 percent in Rumaila without more advanced technology.

- Issam al-Chalabi, Iraq's former oil minister, stated in November 2003 that, "We are losing a lot of oil" ... [It] "is the consensus of all the petroleum engineers involved in the Iraqi industry that maximizing oil production may be detrimental to the reservoirs." An earlier United Nations report on the Kirkuk field issued in 2000 warned of "the possibility of irreversible damage to the reservoir of this supergiant field is now imminent."

The US ignored these issues in its initial approach to nation building, and failed to address them properly after the official end of major combat in Iraq in May 2003. According to the *New York Times*, senior Bush administration officials learned in September 2002, from the Energy Infrastructure Group, that Iraq was reinjecting crude oil to maintain pressure in the Kirkuk field. The EIPG "were unequivocal that that practice had to stop and right away." In October 2003, however, Iraq was still reinjecting 0.150 to 0.250 MMBD, down from as much as 0.4 MMBD, and this has continued through 2005 due to poor planning and a lack of adequate funding.⁸⁹

In addition, the energy planning task force avoided the issue of reservoir development for political reasons, which included efforts to avoid accusations that the US planned to steal Iraq's oil, and also because the group had awarded a no-bid contract for fixing Iraq's oil infrastructure would go to Kellogg, Brown & Root (KBR), a unit of Halliburton which had an existing Pentagon contract related to war planning and was previously run by Vice President Dick Cheney. It did so, without soliciting bids, making any reserve or reservoir development more controversial.⁹⁰

The historical turbulence that has plagued the Iraqi oil industry was described by the EIA as follows:⁹¹

Historically, Iraqi production peaked in December 1979 at 3.7 million bbl/d, and then in July 1990, just prior to its invasion of Kuwait, at 3.5 million bbl/d. From 1991, when production crashed due to war, Iraqi oil output increased slowly, to 600,000 bbl/d in 1996. With Iraq's acceptance in late 1996 of U.N. Resolution 986, which allowed limited Iraqi oil exports in exchange for food and other supplies ("oil-for-food"), the country's oil output began increasing more rapidly, to 1.2 million bbl/d in 1997, 2.2 million bbl/d in 1998, and around 2.5 million bbl/d during 1999-2001. Iraqi monthly oil output increased in the last few months of 2002 and into early 2003, peaking at around 2.58 million bbl/d in January 2003, just before the war. ...

Throughout most of the 1990s, Iraq did not generally have access to the latest, state-of-the-art oil industry technology (3D seismic, directional or deep drilling, gas injection, etc.), sufficient spare parts, and investment. Instead, Iraq reportedly utilized sub-standard engineering techniques (i.e., overpumping), obsolete technology, and systems in various states of decay in order to sustain production. In the long run, reversal of all these practices and utilization of the most modern techniques, combined with development of both discovered fields as well as new ones, could result in Iraq's oil output increasing by several million barrels per day.

In spite of the fact that little damage was done to Iraq's oil fields during the war itself, looting and sabotage after the war ended was highly destructive, accounting for perhaps 80 percent of total damage. Starting in mid-May 2003, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers -- which had the lead in restoring Iraq's oil output to pre-war levels -- began a major effort to ramp up production in the country. On April 22, 2003, the first oil production since the start of the war began at the Rumaila field, with the restart of an important gas/oil separation plant (GOSP). As of November 2005 Iraq's Qarmat Ali water injection facility reportedly was operating at only 70 percent of capacity, holding back production from Rumaila and other southern oil fields.

This uncertainty has not subsided following the US handing sovereignty to Iraqis, the writing of the constitution, or the election of a new Iraqi government. The debate and the language of the constitution may have exacerbated the divisions between Iraq's religious and ethnic factions. Articles 108-111 of the constitution addressed the Iraqi oil sector, but it left many important details uncertain such as the control of oil reserves, the distribution of oil revenues, and the future of Iraqi National Oil Company (INOC).

The US and the interim Iraqi government have given a high priority to restoring Iraqi oil production and exports since the end of the Iraqi War. As of November 2003, Iraq's oil ministry began to call for production levels to rise to 3.0 MMBD in 2004. The US committed some \$2.5 billion in aid to Iraqi oilfield repair in FY2004 funds in 2003, through a contract awarded to Kellogg, Brown, and Root. The Congress appropriated another \$1.701 billion in FY 2004 aid funds in late 2003.

By late March 2004, crude oil production was averaging around 2.4 MMBD and exports around 1.5 MMBD, almost reaching the pre-war high of 2.67 MMBD.⁹² Both offshore oil export terminals were functioning and Iraq's pipeline through Turkey to the port of Ceyhan had been restored to limited production.⁹³ However, an increasingly violent and destabilizing low intensity conflict in the reconstruction period has caused oil production to fall. In 2005, production averaged only 1.9 MMBD.⁹⁴

The EIA highlighted the uncertainty surrounding the future of Iraq's oil production capacity did not decrease after the handing over of sovereignty in June 2004, the writing of the constitution October 2005, and elected a new government in December 2005. The EIA *Country Analysis Brief: Iraq* stated that "As of December 2005, Iraqi production (net of reinjection) was averaging around 1.9 [MMBD], with "gross" production (including reinjection, water cut, and "unaccounted for" oil due in part to problems with metering) of about 2.1 [MMBD]. Most analysts believe that there will be no major additions to Iraqi production capacity for at least 2-3 years, with Shell's Vice President recently stating that any auction of Iraq's oilfields was unlikely before 2007."⁹⁵

The war in Iraq continues, along with sabotage and looting. There is also much more to be done than simply restore pre-war production. Interim Iraqi Oil Minister, Ibrahim Mohammed Bahr al-Uloum, warned in November 2003 that it might cost \$50 billion to reach production levels of 5.0 MMBD and to compensate for years of underinvestment and cannibalization. He noted this would also require a peaceful environment, and several years of intensive work and investment.⁹⁶ That same month, Edward C. Chow, a former Chevron executive and visiting scholar with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, estimated that it would cost \$20 billion to restore Iraqi production to prewar levels.⁹⁷

In addition, the US and the Iraqi Governing Council found that the cumulative impact of past mismanagement, the Iran-Iraq War, the Gulf War, sanctions, fighting and looting in 2003, and the post-Iraq War insurgency will require billions of dollars in US aid, although estimates of the ultimate cost of fully modernizing Iraq's oil facilities, fixing past neglect, and dealing with reservoir problems are constantly being raised due to inefficient spending and the arising of unforeseen problems.

Furthermore, funds initially appropriated by the U.S. to aid the Iraqi oil sector have been diverted to security efforts, as the violence has increased and the need for basic infrastructure outside the

oil sector has proved to be more expensive than originally estimated. Stuart Bowen, U.S. Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction noted in a September 2005 presentation to the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee that \$5 billion that had initially been assigned to the infrastructure reconstruction had been shifted to allow for increased security. Consequently, more money would be required to complete minimum requirements for the project.⁹⁸

Other reports criticize the U.S. for providing funds for much-needed water injection to the damaged southern fields, but neglecting to repair the leaky pipelines carrying the water to the fields. Additionally, delays in the repair of northern field pipelines have forced producers to re-inject oil, harming the environment and slowing the whole process. The U.S. awarded many of these contracts to companies through a no-bid process during the rushed transition to the reconstruction period.⁹⁹

The critical geological assessments have shown particular concern over Iraq's large northern Kirkuk field, which suffers from water seeping into its oil deposits, as well as the major southern oil fields like Rumaila where similar problems are evident. Many of the deficiencies in pipelines and reservoirs stem from years of poor management under Saddam Hussein, rather than being caused by damage from the Iraq War.

Barclay's Capital also issued a report in 2005. The report concluded that "the general integrity of Iraqi oil infrastructure appears to us to be heading backwards rather than forwards." Experts believe that attacks against oil facilities have made it difficult to attract foreign investment to rehabilitate Iraq's aging oil infrastructure. In addition, the legal disputes between Iraq's oil provinces and the central government has delayed exploration and production capacity expansion, and some experts contend that there are no visible improvements, and that there are no meaningful indications to show that things may get better in the near future.¹⁰⁰

The Risk of a Civil War

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

It is important to recognize that here has been political progress in spite of the violence. The final results for the December 15, 2005 elections gave the Sunnis significant representation, in spite of complaints about fraud. The new Council of Representatives had 275 seats and the final results for the election, which were certified on February 9, 2006, gave the main parties the following number of seats: Iraq Alliance (Shi'ites), 128 seats; Kurdish coalition, 53; The Iraqi List (Secular "Allawi list"), 25; Iraqi Accordance Front (Sunnis), 44; Iraqi front for National Dialogue (Sunni), 11. The Shi'ite coalition won 47 percent of the 275 seats, the Kurdish coalition won 21 percent, the Sunni coalition won 21 percent, and Allawi's secular nationalists (with significant Sunni support) won 9 percent.¹⁰¹ The final 1 percent of the seats went to other parties.¹⁰² As no party won a governing majority of the seats in the parliament, a coalition government will have to be formed.

More than 12 million Iraqis voted in the December 2005 election. Sunni turnout increased markedly from the January elections. In Nanawa and Salah ad Din, it grew from 17 percent and 19 percent respectively to 70 percent and 98 percent. In al-Anbar Province it grew from 2

percent in January to 86 percent in December. Nationally, voter turnout was 77 percent, an increase from 58 percent in January.¹⁰³ Of the 1,985 election complaints received by the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq, only 3 percent were considered to have possibly affected the results. These complaints amounted to no more than 1 percent of the total vote, which was voided and excluded from the final count.¹⁰⁴

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

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

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

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

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

- Whether the nation should be divided into federal components by province. If this happens, it would almost inevitably be along ethnic and sectarian lines although the "Kurdish" provinces have many non-Kurdish minority elements, the "Shi'ite" provinces often have large Sunni minorities, and the "Sunni" provinces lack oil and any economic viability. Soft ethnic cleansing has already begun in many parts of Iraq, including Baghdad. "Federalism" could lead to sweeping, violent struggles over given areas and population movements.
- How the nation's oil resources and revenues should be divided and how new areas should be controlled and developed. The Kurds lack oil reserves in their present areas and clearly want Kirkuk and the northern fields. Shi'ites in the south already talk about controlling the bulk of the nation's proven reserves in central and southern Iraq. The Sunnis have potential reserves but no immediate assets, and the central government gets virtually all of its revenue from oil exports.

- Related issues over how to tax and increase Iraq's revenue base, and who should control its revenues. This includes major debates over the powers of the central government, any federal areas, the provinces, and local governments.
- The future security structure of the country, who will really control the armed forces and security forces, and control over provincial and local police forces. This is complicated by a major gap between the intent of the present constitution and the reality of national and local militias. It is further complicated by the fact that the present forces are dominated by Shi'ite and Kurdish elements, and could divide along ethnic and sectarian lines if the nation moved towards full-scale civil war.
- Debates over the role of Islamic law in the government and every aspect of civil law. These issues not only have the potential to divide religious and secular Iraqis but also could lead to struggles over whether Sunni or Shi'ite interpretations should dominate. Both Sunni and Shi'ite Islamist extremists could resort to violence if their views were not adopted.
- Basic issues over governance including the resulting power of the central government and ministries versus provincial and local power.
- Resolving the future of Baghdad, a deeply divided city exempt from being included in any federal area and where soft ethnic cleansing and the relocation of Shi'ites and Sunnis has already become a low-level civil conflict.
- Deciding on how the coming and future budgets should be spent, and how economic aid and development resources should be allocated, in an era where the national budget already exceeds revenues, and massive outside foreign aid and pools of oil for food funds will have been expended.
- Societal issues closely linked to religious differences, and basic differences over the respective role of secular human rights and law and religious law and custom.

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

A New Focus on Attacks on Religious Shrines

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

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

Even so, the destruction of the shrine, which housed the graves of two revered Shi'ite imams, caused an unprecedented wave of sectarian violence in Iraq. In the five days that followed, some estimated that over 1,000 Iraqis were killed, that some 300 Sunni and Shi'ite mosques came under attack, and the country seemed to be on the brink of a large-scale civil war.¹⁰⁵ The Iraqi

government and MNF-I have put these totals at one-third to one-half these "worst case" estimates, but the fact is that no precise numbers exist, and sectarian attacks have continued in the weeks that followed.

Government leaders did call for calm, and peaceful demonstrations were held across the Shi'ite dominated south and in ethnically mixed cities such as Kirkuk.¹⁰⁶ At the same time, many statements by participants and average civilians indicate that Shi'ite patience may well be wearing thin. A Shi'ite employee of the Trade Ministry summed up such views as follows: "You have a TV, you follow the news...who is most often killed? Whose mosques are exploded? Whose society was destroyed?" Another Iraqi put it differently: "We didn't know how to behave. Chaos was everywhere." Even the more moderate Shi'ite newspaper, *Al Bayyna al Jadidah*, urged Shi'ites to assert themselves in the face of Sunni violence. Its editorial stated that it was "time to declare war against anyone who tries to conspire against us, who slaughters us every day. It is time to go to the streets and fight those outlaws."¹⁰⁷

Shi'ite religious leaders also continued to call for calm, but their message was sometimes ambiguous both in words and actions. For example, Moqtada Al-Sadr ordered his Mahdi Militia to protect Shi'ite shrines across Iraq, and blamed the U.S. and Iraqi government for failing to protect the Askariya shrine saying, "If the government had real sovereignty, then nothing like this would have happened." In a speech from Basra, al-Sadr also called for restraint and unity amongst Iraqi's: "I call on Muslims, Sunnis and Shi'ites, to be brothers...Faith is the strongest weapons, not arms." He also publicly ordered his listeners to not attack mosques in retaliation saying, "There is no Sunni mosques and Shi'ite mosques, mosques are for all Muslims...it is one Islam and one Iraq."¹⁰⁸

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

Sunni politicians have since made many charges that Sunni mosques in Baghdad and some southern cities were attacked or actively occupied by the Mahdi Army in the days following the attacks.¹⁰⁹ The Association of Muslim Scholars, a hard-line Sunni clerical organization, alleged that 168 Sunni mosques were attacked, 10 imams killed and 15 abducted.¹¹⁰ The association also made direct appeals to al-Sadr to intervene and stop the violence, apparently suspecting he was a primary coordinator of the Shi'ite attacks. In early March however, U.S. government estimates put the number of mosque attacks at 33, only nine of which were destroyed or sustained significant damage.¹¹¹ In some Sunni areas, residents, fearing attacks on their mosques, erected barricades and stood watch. In Al Moalimin district, armed men patrolled the roof of the Sunni mosque Malik bin Anas.¹¹²

There is no doubt that the attack and its aftermath threatened progress in forming an inclusive government. Iraqi political figures called on the country to recognize that the attack was an attempt to create a civil war and urged Iraqi's to be calm. President Jalal Talabani said the day of the attacks, "We are facing a major conspiracy that is targeting Iraq's unity...we should all stand hand in hand to prevent the danger of a civil war." President Bush echoed these sentiments saying, "The terrorists in Iraq have again proven that they are enemies of all faiths and of all humanity...the world must stand united against them, and steadfast behind the people of Iraq."¹¹³

The violence resulted in the announcement by the dominant Sunni party that it would suspend talks to form a coalition government and issued a list of demands. The immediate attention given to these demands by the Iraqi government, and a telephone call from President Bush to the leaders of the seven major political factions urging them to reinstitute talks, brought Sunnis back to a meeting with their Shi'ite and Kurdish counterparts. Later that evening, Prime Minister al-Jaafari, accompanied by the leaders of the other major coalitions, announced at a press conference that that country would not allow itself to engage in civil war and that this was a moment of "terrific political symbolism."¹¹⁴

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

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

The Future of the Insurgency

The future of the Sunni insurgency now seems dependent on two factors. First, whether the Iraqi political process succeeds in becoming truly inclusive or whether it heightens the sectarian and ethnic tensions and conflicts that divide Iraq and creates a more intense state of civil war. Second, how soon and how well the full range of Iraqi security forces can come on-line and be effective.

Failure in both areas is quite clearly an option. The odds of Iraq drifting into a serious civil war are impossible to quantify but the risk is clearly serious. At the same time, the insurgency may well divide between its more secular or "nationalist" elements and the Islamist extremist groups.

The "Nationalist" Need for Compromise

Given their present strength, the more nationalistic Sunni insurgents have good reason to seek a political compromise if the Shi'ites and Kurds offer them an inclusive government and acceptable terms. They at best seem capable of paralyzing progress, and fighting a long war of attrition, rather than defeating an Iraqi government which is dominated by a cohesive Shi'ite majority, and which maintains good relations with the Kurds.

Regardless of who is doing the counting, the total for active and passive native Iraqi Sunni insurgents still leaves them a small minority of Iraq's population. Unless the Iraqi government

divides or collapses, they cannot bring back Arab Sunni minority rule or the Ba'ath; they cannot regain the level of power, wealth, and influence they once had. They cannot reestablish the form of largely secular rule that existed under Saddam, or reestablish Iraq as a country that most Arabs see as "Sunni."

An understanding of these same political and military realities may eventually drive most of the more moderate and pragmatic Sunni insurgents to join the non-violent political process in Iraq *if* the Shi'ite and Kurds elements that now dominate the government and political process act to include them and provide suitable incentives.

Such shifts, however, are likely to be slow and uncertain. Historically, most insurgent groups have a much better vision of what they oppose than what they are for, and they have limited interest in pragmatic *realpolitik*. Most Sunni groups are still committed to doing everything -- and sometimes anything -- they can to drive the Coalition out and break up the peaceful political process almost regardless of the damage done to Iraq and to Sunni areas.

Richard Armitage, the former US Deputy Secretary of State, commented on the insurgency and its lack of realistic political goals as follows: "In Algeria, the so-called insurgents, or in Vietnam, the so-called insurgents, they had ... a program and a positive view...In Iraq that's lacking ... they only have fear to offer. They only have terror to offer. This is why they're so brutal in their intimidation."¹¹⁵

The "Islamist" Need for Civil War

The risk also exists that the Sunni Islamist extremists have become better trained and organized to the point where they are now able to establish themselves as *the* dominant political and military force within the Sunni community—particularly if Iraq's Arab Shi'ites and Kurds mishandle the situation or react to the growing provocation of bloody suicide attacks and other killings by Neo-Salafi extremists.¹¹⁶

The Sunni Islamist extremists can then try to present themselves as the only legitimate alternative to the occupation, even if they fail to provide a popular agenda. This means they can survive and endure as long as the government is too weak to occupy the insurgency dominated areas, and as long as the large majority of Sunnis in given areas does not see a clear incentive to join the government and Iraq's political process.

Much will depend on just how willing Iraqi Shi'ites and Kurds are to forget the past, not overreact to Sunni Islamist and other attacks designed to divide and splinter the country, and continue to offer Iraqi Sunnis a fair share of wealth and power. The US position is clear. The US consistently supported a unified nation and inclusive government. US Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, stated in an interview that the Ministries of Defense and Interior must be headed by those who have broad based support: "The security ministries have to be run by people who are not associated with militias and who are not regarded as sectarian."¹¹⁷ Later, Ambassador Khalilzad went further and directly tied the future of US economic and military support to the ability of Iraqi leaders to form an inclusive government saying, "We [the US] are not going to invest the resources of the American people and build forces that are run by people who are sectarian."¹¹⁸

The Threat from Shi'ite Death Squads and Militias

While the Islamists have made it one of their goal to ignite civil war between the Sunnis and Shi'ites, there were more and more reports of revenge killing and anti-Sunni strikes by both the Shi'ite militias and Shi'ite elements in the security forces and police during the rest of 2005, and stronger indications that Shi'ite militias were playing a growing role in Iraq's low-level civil war.¹¹⁹ There are credible reports that hundred of Sunni bodies have been found in locations like rivers, desert roads, open desert, sewage disposal facilities, and garbage dumps since the new government was formed that April.

The Baghdad morgue reported growing numbers of corpses with their hands bound by police handcuffs, and that it processed 7,553 corpses between January and September 2005, versus only 5,239 for the same period in 2004. Sunni groups like the Moslem Scholars Association have published pictures of such corpses and lists of the dead, and have claimed there are Shi'ite death squadrons. The Inspector General of the Ministry of the Interior, General Nori Nori said that, "There are such groups operating -- yes this is correct." In November, a raid on a secret MOI detention facility in southeastern Baghdad, which was operated by former members of the Badr Brigade, was linked to the death of 18 detainees reported to have died under torture. Some 220 men were held in filthy conditions within this prison and many were subjected to torture.¹²⁰

Minister of Interior Jabr denied any government involvement, and claimed that if MOI security forces and police uniforms and cars have been seen, they were stolen. Other sources, however, confirmed that some of the killings of an estimated 700 Sunnis between August and November 2005 involved men who identified themselves as Ministry of Interior forces.¹²¹ This increased the risk that Iraqi forces could be divided by factions, decreasing their effectiveness and leading to the disintegration of Iraqi forces if Iraq were to descend into full-scale civil war.

The killing of at least 14 Sunnis could be clearly traced to MOI arrest records several weeks earlier.¹²² US sources also noted that a large number of members of the Badr Organization had joined the MOI forces, including the police and commando units, since the new government was formed in April 2003. The lines between some MOI units and the Badr Organization were becoming increasingly blurred.

During the winter of 2005 and 2006, body dumps became a favoured tactic by insurgents and militias. Although this trend existed long before the February 22 Askariya bombing, it increased thereafter and became part of the cyclical sectarian violence carried out by Shi'ites and Sunnis. It would be almost impossible to catalogue all of the discoveries, but finding ten to twenty corpses at one site was not uncommon and each day usually resulted in at least one "body dump" being reported. For example, in the period from March 7 until March 21, over 191 bodies were found.

Common characteristics could be found within these "mystery killings." Increasingly, the victims were relatively ordinary Shi'ites or Sunnis and were not directly working for the government of Coalition forces. Often times, victims were taken from their homes or businesses in daylight by masked gunmen or men wearing police or security force uniforms and driving standard issue trucks. These attributes, and the fact that the bodies were almost always found in the same condition-- blindfolded, handcuffed, and shot in the head showing signs of torture--lent credibility to the claim that many of the killings were perpetrated by Shi'ite militias themselves, or elements of security forces dominated by these militias.

The frequency of “extra-judicial killings” was discussed in a UN Human Rights Report and linked to police forces: “A large number of extrajudicial killings, kidnappings and torture were reportedly perpetrated mainly by members of armed militias linked to political factions or criminal gangs. The same methods of execution-style killings are usually used: mass arrests without judicial warrant and extrajudicial executions with bodies found afterwards bearing signs of torture and killed by a shot to the head.”

Baghdad, a “mixed” city, was ground zero for much of this violence. More Iraqi civilians were killed in Baghdad during the first three months of 2006, than at any time since the end of the Saddam regime. Between, January and March, 3,800 Iraqi civilians were killed, a significant number of which were found tied, shot in the head and showing signs of torture.¹²³ According to the Baghdad morgue in May 2006, it received on average 40 bodies a day. Anonymous U.S. officials disclosed that the targeted sectarian killings, or soft-sectarian cleansing, claim nine times more lives than car bombings and that execution killings increased by 86% in the nine weeks after the February mosque bombing.¹²⁴

Sectarian militias did more than infiltrate the security forces. There have been numerous incidents of the al-Mahdi Army installing its own members to head hospitals, dental offices, schools, trucking companies, and other private businesses. Rank employees are often fired for no reason. As a Baghdad University professor said, “We are all victims of this new thought police. No longer content to intimidate us with violence, these militias want to control our every move, so they appoint the administrators and managers while dissenters lose their jobs.”¹²⁵

Links to the Iraqi Police and Special Security Forces

The police expanded from some 31,000 men in July 2004 to nearly 95,000 in July 2005, sometimes with only limited background checks. In the process, substantial numbers of men from both the Badr Organization and the Moqtada Al Sadr's Mahdi Army joined the force. In the case of the roughly 65,000 strong mix of MOI and police forces in the greater Baghdad area, the men from the Bader Organization generally tended to go into the MOI special security units and those from the Mahdi Army tended to join the police. While both the Iraqi government and Coalition claimed the situation was improving, a September 2005 report by the ICG suggested that the process of drafting a constitution had helped exacerbate the existing ethnic and sectarian divisions between Iraqis.¹²⁶

By late 2005, US officials and military sources were complaining that the MOI and Minister Jabr were not informing them of some MOI and police operations and privately acknowledged that they had observed prisoner abuse. Commenting on the futility of filing reports against the incidents, one U.S. official equated it with “trying to put out a forest fire with a bucket of water.”¹²⁷

They expressed particular concern about the actions of the MOI's Maghawir or Fearless Warrior special commando units, which were carrying out of illegal raids and killings. This 12,000-man force had a number of Sunni officers and had originally been formed under the authority of former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi. Since the new government was formed in April 2005 however, it had recruited larger numbers of new Shi'ite members. Its commander, General Rashid Flaih Mohammed was reported to have acknowledged that the unit had had some problems. Sunni police commanders like Brigadier General Mohammed Ezzawi Hussein

Alwann, commander of the Farook Brigade, were also purged from the MOI forces, along with junior officers.¹²⁸

While the revelations of large-scale abuses draw the greatest attention, less severe, day-to-day incidents are no less important and can be illustrative of the underlying sectarian tension in Iraq. For example, when several policemen arrived at an Iraqi police station with three suspected insurgents in plastic cuffs, U.S. Sgt. 1st Class Joel Perez had to cut the cuffs because they were too tight and causing the prisoners' hands to swell and turn blue. Later, one of the Iraqi policeman involved confided in a reporter, "They [the insurgents] need to be beaten up. The Americans won't let us...I want to have two cars and tie each hand to a different car and break them in half."¹²⁹

This and previous incidents drew comments by both U.S. and Iraqi officials. U.S. military procedure and policy was clarified in a back-and-forth between Secretary Rumsfeld and Joint Chief of Staff Peter Pace when Pace declared, "it's absolutely the responsibility of every U.S. service member if they see inhumane treatment being conducted to intervene to stop it." Secretary Rumsfeld countered, "I don't think you mean they have an obligation to physically stop it; it's to report it." Pace respectfully reiterated, "If they are physically present when inhumane treatment is taking place, sir, they have an obligation to stop it." Putting prisoner abuse in perspective, former Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi commented to a British newspaper that "people are doing the same as Saddam's time and worse."¹³⁰

In a February 2006 Department of Defense report to Congress, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," police, military and justice detention facilities were singled out as being "typically maintained at higher standards than those of the Ministry of Interior facilities." The report also suggested that to correct the "imbalance", joint U.S.-Iraqi "teams will continue to inspect Iraqi detention facilities, with appropriate remediation through Iraqi-led triage and follow-up logistical, security, public relations, and political support."¹³¹

At the same time, Sunni Islamic insurgents and some Sunni politic figures had every reason to try to implicate the security services. Some of the killings in late November involved key Sunni politicians like Ayad Alizi and Al Hussein, leading members of the Iraqi Islamic Party, a member of the Sunni coalition competing in the December 15th elections. Shi'ites seemed to have little reason to strike at such targets.¹³²

Questionable Loyalties

Regardless, the immediate problem for the Iraqi government became controlling elements of the ISF whose loyalties were clearly not with the national government, and moreover trying to get these groups to uphold the law rather than engage in or tacitly allow violence. For example, after a public warning issued on April 7 by the MOI telling Iraqis not to gather in crowded areas because of specific intelligence indicating a series of car bombs were likely, it had to similarly warn ISF not to impede this order. The ministry threatened legal action against "any security official who fails to take the necessary procedures to foil any terrorist attack in his area."¹³³

In what may have been the largest incident at the time involving MOI security forces, in early March gunmen wearing MOI uniforms allegedly stormed a Sunni owned security firm and abducted 50 of its employees.¹³⁴ The Interior Ministry denied its involvement in the event. Later in the same month, investigators discovered and broke up a group of police who ran a kidnapping and extortion ring. Allegedly led by an Iraqi police major general, this group

kidnapped individuals, sometimes killing them, and forced their families to pay ransoms that they then pocketed.¹³⁵ In April, the bodies of three young men were recovered from a sewage ditch. According to co-workers, the three were last seen being arrested by MOI forces after their minibus had been pulled over.¹³⁶ In May, two employees of the al-Nahrain television station were kidnapped on their way home by MOI forces according to witnesses. Their bodies were found the next day, along with six other Sunni men. All had been blindfolded, burned with cigarette butts and severely beaten.¹³⁷

Although the MOI continued to deny that it had any role in the increased sectarian violence since the February shrine bombing, accusations mounted and the accumulation of incidents made this denial more difficult. The consistency and continuation of “body dumps”, the corpses often exhibiting signs of torture and shot execution style, and strings of abductions in which the gunmen wore ISF uniforms, furthered tension between al-Jaafari and the U.S. who had been pressuring the Prime Minister to rein in the militias. The fear generated within the Sunni community by the merging of Shi’ite militias and ISF was illustrated by an advisory on a Sunni-run television network, which told its viewers not to allow Iraqi police or soldiers into their homes unless U.S. troops were present.¹³⁸

For some Sunnis, the presence of U.S. forces provided a degree of assurance against abuses of power by Iraqi security forces. In Dora, local leaders agreed that Iraqi forces could only conduct raids in mosques if U.S. soldiers accompanied them. This same rule was later implemented in Baghdad as well. The fact that Sunnis requested the presence of U.S. troops in Islamic holy places during searches, something that earlier would have been inconceivable, was a testament to the depth of sectarian divides and the genuine distrust between the Shi’ite dominated police forces and Sunni communities.¹³⁹ As Ali Hassan, a Sunni, bluntly stated, “We prefer to be detained by Americans instead of Iraqis. Second choice would be the Iraqi army. Last choice, Iraqi police.”¹⁴⁰

In late March, the U.S. administration openly voiced its disapproval of al-Jaafari as the next prime minister. Ambassador Khalilzad added that due to his lack of leadership, Shi’ite-led militias were now killing more Iraqis than the Sunni insurgency.¹⁴¹

Al-Jaafari’s response, which warned the U.S. not to interfere with the democratic process in Iraq, addressed the issue of Shi’ite militias being incorporated in the security forces and his political alliance with al-Sadr, whose support put him in office. He stated that he favored engaging with Sadr and his followers instead of isolating him and that he viewed the militias as part of Iraq’s “de facto reality.” He continued to voice support for a government that looks past sectarian differences and to work toward integrating the militias into the police and army.¹⁴²

In April, Iraq’s Interior Minister Jabr refused to deploy any of the thousands of police recruits trained by the joint US-UK Civilian Police Assistance Training Team (CPATT). Although graduates of this program had been available for over three months, Jabr chose to hire those trained outside of the program because he claimed he had no control over CPATT’s selection process. The US was concerned that this was an attempt by the minister to sustain the sectarian makeup of the forces and continue to incorporate those with allegiance to the Badr Brigade into its ranks.¹⁴³

The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq’s Human Rights Report specifically highlighted the threat of militias within the security forces and that it had received information “regarding the actions

of some segments of the security forces, in particular the police and special forces, and their apparent collusion with militias in carrying out human rights violations.”¹⁴⁴

There were concerns that even Iraqi brigades that were touted as “mixed,” in that they struck a balance between Shi’ites and Sunnis within their ranks, were still overwhelmingly Shi’ite. There were reports of at least one soldier who was proudly wearing an al-Sadr t-shirt under his Army uniform. In interviews as well, many of the soldiers privately confided that if they were ever asked to fight the Mahdi Army, they would have to quit the Iraqi forces.¹⁴⁵ Brig. Gen. Abdul Kareem Abdul Rahman al-Yusef, a Sunni admitted that his brigade was 87% Shi’ite and included members of the Badr Organization. Despite this, he still believed that “it’s not the time to ask the militias to put down their arms,” given that the government cannot provide security to its citizens.¹⁴⁶

As Lt. Col. Chris Pease, deputy commander of the U.S. military’s police training programs in eastern Baghdad put it, “We’re not stupid. We know for a fact that they’re killing people. We dig the damn bodies out of the sewer all of the time. But there’s a difference between knowing something and proving something.” Capt. Ryan Lawrence, an intelligence officer with the 2nd Brigade Special Police Transition Team, displayed similar feelings, “Training and equipping a force, while knowing that at least some element is infiltrated by militias, is a difficult situation.”¹⁴⁷

Pease also admitted that an Iraqi police officer had confided in him the reality and extent of the militia infiltration into ISF. “His assessment was that the militias are everywhere,” Pease said, “and his officers weren’t going to do anything about that because their units are infiltrated and they know what the cost would be for working against the militias.”¹⁴⁸

Although U.S. troops can and do accompany developing Iraqi units on raids to ensure proper treatment of detainees, as Iraqi’s increasingly take the lead and missions are based on Iraqi intelligence, the line between counterinsurgency and revenge can become blurry for Coalition soldiers. After a joint U.S.-Iraqi raid in March in which 10 Sunnis were rounded up, one U.S. colonel remembered thinking immediately after, “Wait a sec, were we just part of some sort of sectarian revenge?”¹⁴⁹

Indeed, many of the soldiers who were on their second tour in Iraq returned to a different war. Whereas before the focus was on the Sunni insurgency, it now was about containing the Shi’ite militias and preventing further infiltration into the security forces.¹⁵⁰

While details were still uncertain, events of a two-day fire fight in the Adhamiyah district, a Sunni neighborhood, indicated the possibility that a local Sunni militia had taken up arms against what it saw as an attack by a Shi’ite “death squad” disguised as a police force. In the process, some locals claimed that the Sunni dominated Army, responding with the U.S. to engage “insurgents,” actually fired on the incoming police forces.¹⁵¹

The Iraqi government denied claims that Interior Ministry forces had been involved. Rather it suggested that insurgent groups, portraying themselves as police and security forces, provoked the violence. It specifically identified those groups as the Islamic Army of Iraq, the 1920 Revolution Brigades and al-Qa’ida.¹⁵² While the government claims could not be verified, al-Qa’ida in Iraq did issue a statement promising “a new raid to avenge the Sunnis at Adhamiyah and the other areas, and the raid will start with the dawn of Wednesday, if God wishes...The Shiite areas will be an open battlefield for us.”¹⁵³

While it was not clear if Shi'ite police forces were even present, or if the Army was mistaken for a police force as suggested by U.S. claims, the event illustrated a growing distrust between Sunnis and Iraqi Security Forces. The threat from Shi'ite death squads, whether real or perceived, caused the town to arm themselves, coordinate action, and attempt to repel the invading police forces.

The Kurdish Question

The January 2005 elections made the Kurds far more powerful relative to other Iraqi factions in military and security terms than their 15% of the population might indicate. Iraqi security and stability depends on finding a power-sharing arrangement that gives the Kurds incentives to be part of the political process just as much as it does on developing such arrangements for the Arab Sunnis.

There is no basic political or economic reason such a compromise cannot be found. Unfortunately, however, Iraq has a long history of not finding such compromises on a lasting basis and Saddam Hussein's legacy left many areas where Kurds were forcibly expelled and Sunni Arabs and minorities were given their homes and property.

Large numbers of Kurds favor independence over political inclusiveness. This helps explain why the Kurdish turnout in the October referendum on the constitution varied widely. In predominantly Kurdish provinces, participation was much lower than in the January election. Some analysts have suggested the lower turnout was a result of increased voter apathy among a Kurdish population who felt assured the Constitution would pass.

Others noted the increase in dissatisfaction with the central government and the idea of remaining in Iraq among Kurdish populations. Riots and demonstrations protesting the shortages of gas, fuel and power have become more common in Kurdish cities.¹⁵⁴ Some Kurds may also have felt let down by a Constitution that did not specifically address the status of Kirkuk or lay out a clear path to secession.¹⁵⁵

Kurdish Parties and the Kurdish Militias

The two major Kurdish parties, the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) headed by Masoud Barzani and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, headed by Jalal Talabani, retain powerful militias, known collectively as the Peshmerga. Their current strength is difficult to estimate, and some elements are either operating in Iraqi forces or have been trained by US advisors. The Iraqi Kurds could probably assemble a force in excess of 10,000 fighters – albeit of very different levels of training and equipment.

The Kurdish Pesh Merga trace their origins to the Iraqi civil wars of the 1920s. They fought against the Saddam Hussein regime during the Iran-Iraq war and supported U.S. and Coalition military action in 2003. The Peshmerga groups of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) serve as the primary security force for the Kurdish regional government. The PUK and KDP claim that there are 100,000 Peshmerga troops, and they have insisted on keeping the Peshmerga intact as guarantors of Kurdish security and political self-determination.

Tensions Between the Kurds and Other Iraqis

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.

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 extremist groups in Iraq like Ansar al-Sunna, and even had links to intelligence services from nearby countries.¹⁵⁶ This evidence was not made public, but the Kurdish authorities stated that it appeared as though various groups were working together and that, to the anger and disappointment of the Kurdish authorities, that local Kurds were assisting them.

Tension between the Kurds and Iraqi Arabs and other minorities has also been critical in areas like Kirkuk and Mosul. The Kurds claim territory claimed by other Iraqi ethnic groups, and demand the return of property they assert was seized by Saddam Hussein, during his various efforts at ethnic cleansing from 1975 to 2003.

The future of Kirkuk and the northern oil fields around it is the subject of considerable local and national political controversy between the Kurds and other Iraqis. The Kurds claim that over 220,000 Kurds were driven out of their homes by Saddam in the 1970s and fighting in the Gulf War, and that over 120,000 Arabs were imported into “Kurdish territory.” The Kurds see control of Kirkuk as their one chance to have territorial control over a major portion of Iraq’s oil reserves, but Kirkuk is now roughly 35% Kurd, 35% Arab, 26% Turcoman, and 4% other. This makes any such solution almost impossible unless it involves violent means.

There has been armed violence between Kurds, Arabs, and 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.

Reports in August 2005 indicated that government police and military forces in the Kurdish north were using their power to intimidate Arabs through abductions and assassinations. Such activity poses the threat of deepening regional fissures. Likewise, the misuse of power by Coalition-sponsored forces could deepen resentment toward Coalition forces, particularly among the Sunni population.¹⁵⁷

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 in an apparent bid to create an overwhelming Kurdish majority.¹⁵⁸ This activity allegedly spread to Mosul as well. While some of the abductions had occurred in 2004, reports indicated that there was a renewed effort following the January 30th elections that solidified the two parties’ primacy in the Kurdish areas.

According to a leaked State Department cable in mid-June 2005, the abducted were taken to KDP and PUK intelligence-run prisons in Irbil and Sulaymaniyah without the knowledge of the Iraqi Ministry of Defense or the Ministry of the Interior, but sometimes with US knowledge. In fact, the Emergency Services Unit, a special Kirkuk force within the police, was both closely tied to the US military and implicated in many of the abductions, along with the Asayesh Kurdish intelligence service.¹⁵⁹ 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.¹⁶⁰ According to Kirkuk's chief of police, Gen. Turhan Yusuf Abdel-Rahman, 40% of his 6,120 officers probably assisted in the abductions, disobeying his orders and following the directives of the KDP and PUK instead. Abdel-Rahman stated, "The main problem is that the loyalty of the police is to the parties and not the police force. They'll obey the parties' orders and disobey us."¹⁶¹ According to Abdel-Rahman, the provincial police director, Sherko Shakir Hakim, refused to retire as ordered by the government in Baghdad once he was assured that the KDP and PUK would continue to pay him if he stayed on. The various factions in Kirkuk seem to have agreed on a compromise local government in June 2005, but the city continues to present a serious risk of future conflict.

The issue of Kirkuk took on a new importance after the December 2005 elections. In the months prior, thousands of Kurds erected settlements in the city, often with financing from the two main Kurdish parties. In addition, violence began to rise, with 30 assassination-style killings from October through December. Kurdish political groups were increasingly open about their intent to incorporate Kirkuk into Iraqi Kurdistan and continue to repatriate Kurds into the city in an effort to tip the ethnic balance in their favor. They stated they that sought to accomplish this by the time of the popular referendum in 2007, which is to determine whether the Tamim province will be governed by the Kurdish regional government, or from Baghdad.¹⁶² The future of Kirkuk will be a central factor for Kurdish political groups as they work to form a governing coalition.

The reelection of al-Jaafari as Prime Minister further frustrated the Kurdish politicians. They accused him of being slow to implement Article 58 of the constitution that stipulates that the question of the "normalization" of Kirkuk must take place by the end of 2007.¹⁶³ In fact, the political alliance between Kurds and Shi'ites, once considered natural given their common grievances against the Sunni-dominated Ba'ath party, was opening up to question.¹⁶⁴

Kurdish views of the increased sectarian violence between Sunni and Shi'ite Arabs differed. One perspective has its roots in the historical animosity between Kurds and Arabs. A sectarian civil war could bring benefits to the Kurds if, as one individual said, "our enemies [are] killing each other."¹⁶⁵ According to this theory, if civil war breaks out in Iraq, the Kurds will then be justified in breaking away to form an independent Kurdistan. In this situation, the international community would be forced to acquiesce to such a move.¹⁶⁶

The opposite view is more hesitant and less optimistic. These individuals worry that although civil war may initially begin in central and southern Iraq, it could spread northward, threatening the stability and relative security they have attained since the 2003 invasion. In fact, there were some reports in the first months of 2006 that Shi'ite militias were migrating north into cities like Kirkuk and moving into mosques in the area as a protection force.¹⁶⁷ If civil war does reach the

Kurds, some believe Iraqi Arabs, as well as Turkey, Syria and Iran would object to Kurdish separation and that countries such as Turkey that have sizeable Kurdish populations, may intervene militarily to prevent an independent Kurdish nation.¹⁶⁸

In April 2006, Shi'ite militias began to deploy to Kirkuk in substantial numbers. According to U.S. embassy officials in the region, the Mahdi Army had sent two companies with 120 men each. The Badr Organization extended its reach into the city as well and opened several offices across the Kurdish region. The influx of Shi'ite militias began in the days following the February 22 Askariya bombing. The shift northward was justified by the organizations as a necessary step to protect Shi'ite mosques and families. Yet Shi'ites, many of whom were transferred to the area under Saddam's rule, only make up about 5% of the population in the area.¹⁶⁹

Although Iraqi security officials in Kirkuk maintain that the new militia arrivals have generally kept a low profile, the Kurdish Peshmerga responded by moving nearly 100 additional troops to the area. Moreover, an al-Sadr associate in the region, Abdul Karim Khalifa, told U.S. officials that more men were on the way and that as many as 7,000 to 10,000 local residents loyal to the Mahdi Army would join in a fight if one were to come.¹⁷⁰

The Kurdish militias have not yet presented as many problems for Iraqi security and Iraqi force development as the Shi'ite militias, but the deployment of Shi'ite militias into the Kirkuk area makes it clear that this is no guarantee for the future. Kurdish separatism and claims to areas like Kirkuk and Iraq's northern oil fields remain potentially explosive issues. Thousands of Kurdish Peshmerga soldiers were incorporated into the Iraqi army during the formation of Iraqi forces.¹⁷¹ The Kurdish adage, "the Kurds have no friends," seemed to hold true here as well. While Kurdish army units could operate effectively in their relatively ethnically homogenous north, they were often perceived as outsiders in Arab areas.

Even in the northern city of Balad in March 2006, a 700-man Kurdish army battalion was confined to their base by an angry and hostile Sunni population. The battalion, sent from Sulaimaniyah to bolster the lone Shi'ite forces comprised of local residents, was resisted by the large Sunni minority in the area so much so that commanders were afraid to let their soldiers leave the base. U.S. officials in the city said that this was because the battalion was mostly former Peshmerga, the armed group that has become the de facto army of the regional government in Kurdistan.¹⁷²

In May, a Kurdish-dominated army unit openly clashed with its Shi'ite counterpart. The 1st Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 4th Division hit a roadside bomb in Duluiyah north of Baghdad. Although U.S. and Iraqi officials disagreed over the number of dead and wounded in the incident, the Kurdish division raced their wounded to the U.S. hospital in Balad. According to police reports when they arrived they began firing their weapons, ostensibly to clear the way, killing a Shi'ite civilian. As security forces arrived, the Kurdish army unit attempted to leave and take their wounded elsewhere. A Shi'ite army unit from the 3rd Battalion, 1st Brigade tried to stop them and shots were exchanged, killing a member of the 3rd Battalion. As the Kurdish unit attempted to leave in their vehicles, a third army unit attempted to establish a roadblock to stop them. U.S. forces however, were at the scene to intervene and restore calm.¹⁷³

Uncertain Kurdish Unity

Kurdish unity is always problematic. The Kurds have a saying that, "the Kurds have no friends." History shows that this saying should be, "the Kurds have no friends including the Kurds." The

Barzani and Talibani factions have fought on several occasions, and there was a state of civil war between them during 1993-1995. PUK forces were able to take control of Irbil in 1994, and put an end to the first attempt to create a unified and elected government that began in 1992. Barzani's KDP collaborated with Saddam Hussein in 1995, when Hussein sent a full corps of troops into Irbil and other parts of the area occupied by Talibani. Tens of thousands of Kurds and anti-Saddam activists fled the area, and the US did not succeed in brokering a settlement between the two factions until 1998.¹⁷⁴

Despite past, and potential future tensions and divisions between the PUK and KDP, leaders from both parties signed an agreement in January 2006, which allotted eleven ministerial posts to each group. Minority parties were skeptical of KDP-PUK promises to give remaining posts to political factions who did not win a majority and worried that this further isolated them from any future role in the political process.¹⁷⁵

The present marriage of convenience between the KDP and PUK has not unified the Kurdish controlled provinces in the north. There were minor clashes between their supporters in 1995, and these political divisions could create future problems for both Kurdish political unity and any agreement on some form of autonomy.

Kurdish frustration with these political parties manifested itself in violent protests in 2006 during ceremonies marking the anniversary of the March 1988 poison gas attack by Hussein at Halabja. Protestors alleged that the PUK and KDP had misappropriated millions of dollars in foreign aid given to the survivors of the attack.¹⁷⁶ The protestors also complained about the shortage of water and electricity.¹⁷⁷

The protests, which began at 9am, slowly grew in number and groups began setting fire to tires and throwing rocks at the monument and museum dedicated to those killed under Saddam's rule.¹⁷⁸

The few PUK dozen guards in front of the monument, who attempted to disperse the crowd by firing into the air, were outnumbered and forced to retreat. The protestors destroyed museum exhibits with rocks and then attempted to set it on fire. One protestor was killed by the gunfire from the guards and six others were wounded.¹⁷⁹ A regional official, Shahu Mohammed Saed, who according to reports was one of the targets of the peoples' frustration, blamed the riots on Ansar al-Islam.¹⁸⁰ However, there seems to be little indication that this assertion is true.

The Problem of Resources and Oil

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 to these states.

The Turkish Question

All these problems are still further 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 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.¹⁸¹ These same factors help explain why Turkey has actively supported Iraq's small Turcoman minority in its power struggles with Iraq's Kurds.

The February 2006 visit to Turkey by Prime Minister al-Jaafari created concern among Kurdish politicians and accusations that the trip was carried out in secret.¹⁸²

Relationship with Neighboring States

Many of these problems and difficulties concern the challenges to the prospects of stability in Iraq. If one, however, looks the implications of an unstable Iraq, one must understand the consequences of the future of Iraq to the Gulf security and the "Global War on Terrorism."

Each country's chapter in this book outlines the implication of instability in Iraq to the national security of each country. Iraq, however, has its own challenges in dealing with neighboring states. While some states have been accused of aiding the insurgency, others have been accused of interfering in its internal affairs, and others been passive.

The pressure for civil war can also expand to involve outside states. Syria very clearly tolerates and supports Sunni neo-Salafi extremist operations on its territory in spite of its Alawite controlled government. A broader and more intense civil conflict could lead other Arab states to take sides on behalf of the Sunnis -- although Bahrain, Lebanon, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen are just a few of the states that have deep sectarian divisions of their own. Any major divisions within Iraq could reopen the Kurdish issue as it affects Turkey, and possibly Iran and Syria as well.

Creating a "Shi'ite Crescent"?

The most serious wild card in Iraq's immediate neighborhood is Iran. Iran already plays at least some role in the political instability in Iraq and may take a more aggressive role in trying to shape Iraq's political future and security position in the Gulf. Some believe that the Iranians have abandoned their efforts to export their "Shi'ite revolution" to the Gulf. This view has changed since the invasion of Iraq. Officials across the Arab world, especially in Saudi Arabia and Jordan, have expressed reservation over the right of Iraqi Sunnis, Kurdish and Shi'ite dominance over the Iraqi government, and a new "strategic" Shi'ite alliance between Iran and Iraq.

Jordan's King Abdullah has claimed that that more than 1 million Iranians have moved into Iraq to influence the January 2005 Iraqi election. The Iranians, King Abdullah argued, have been trying to build pro-Iranian attitudes in Iraq by providing salaries to the unemployed. The King has also said that Iran's Revolutionary Guards were helping the militant groups fighting the US in Iraq, and warned in an interview with the *Washington Post* of a "Shi'ite Crescent" forming between Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon.¹⁸³

It is in Iran's vested interest to have an Islamic republic of Iraq.

If Iraq goes Islamic republic, then, yes, we've opened ourselves to a whole set of new problems that will not be limited to the borders of Iraq. I'm looking at the glass half-full, and let's hope that's not the case. But strategic planners around the world have got to be aware that is a possibility.

Even Saudi Arabia is not immune from this. It would be a major problem. And then that would propel the possibility of a Shi'ite-Sunni conflict even more, as you're taking it out of the borders of Iraq.

The same sentiment has been echoed by the former interim Iraqi President, Ghazi Al-Yawar, a Sunni and a pro-Saudi tribal leader. "Unfortunately, time is proving, and the situation is proving, beyond any doubt that Iran has very obvious interference in our business -- a lot of money, a lot of intelligence activities and almost interfering daily in business and many [provincial] governorates, especially in the southeast side of Iraq." Mr. Al-Yawar asserted that Iraq should not go in the direction of Iran in creating a religious oriented government. He was quoted in a *Washington Post* interview as saying "We cannot have a sectarian or religious government... We really will not accept a religious state in Iraq. We haven't seen a model that succeeded."¹⁸⁴

Both Iranian and Iraqi Shi'ites rejected these comments. Iran called King Abdullah's comment "an insult" to Iraq. Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman, Hamid Reza Asefi, also called on Ghazi Al-Yawar to retract his statement and accused King Abdullah II and Al-Yawar of wanting to influence the election against Iraqi Shi'ites. Asefi said "Unfortunately, some political currents in Iraq seek to tarnish the trend of election there and cause concern in the public opinion... We expect that Mr. al-Yawar takes the existing sensitive situation into consideration and avoids repeating such comments."¹⁸⁵

Iraqi Shi'ites also reacted to King Abdullah's comment about the fear of a "Shi'ite Crescent." Jordan's King Abdullah was asked to apologize by Shi'ites. The Najaf Theological Center issued a statement, in which they accused the King of meddling in Iraq's internal affairs:¹⁸⁶

Distorting the truth and blatantly interfering in Iraqi affairs, provoking tribal sentiments in the region against Iraqi Shi'ites, provoking great powers against Iraqi Shi'ites, intimidating regional countries and accusing them of having links with Iran, displaying a great tendency for ensuring Israel's security and expressing worries about the victory of Shi'ites in the upcoming elections tantamount to insulting millions of people in Iran, who have been insulted just because they follow a religion that the Jordan's king is opposed...

Najaf Theological Center is hopeful that the Jordanian monarch will apologize to the Shi'ites of the region and Iraq, and their religious authorities, because of the inaccurate remarks made against them.

The Arab Gulf States

The Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, have also made their views known regarding the unity of Iraq and their fear of Shi'ite dominance of an Arab country that allies itself with Iran. Saudi Arabia has pushed for more Sunni inclusiveness in the constitution writing process, especially after their lack of participation in the January 2005 elections.

When a draft constitution did not acknowledge Iraq's Arab and Muslim identity, the General Secretary of the GCC called the Iraqi constitution "a catastrophe." The Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal, also warned that if the constitution does not accommodate the Iraqi Sunni community, it would result in sectarian disputes that may threaten the unity of Iraq.¹⁸⁷

Prince Saud al-Faisal later urged the US to pressure Iraqi Shi'ites and Kurdish government leaders to work to bring the Iraqi people together. He said, "[Americans] talk now about Sunnis

as if they were separate entity from the Shi'ite." Al-Faisal reiterated his fear of an Iraqi civil war saying, "If you allow civil war, Iraq is finished forever."¹⁸⁸

Al-Faisal also predicted that a civil war in Iraq could have dire consequences in the region and indicated the Kingdom feared an Iran-Iraq alliance. The Saudi Foreign Minister asserted "We (US and Saudi Arabia) fought a war together to keep Iran out of Iraq after Iraq was driven out of Kuwait." He added that the US policy in Iraq is "handing the whole country over to Iran without reason." Iranians have established their influence within Iraq, al-Faisal said, because they "pay money ... install their own people (and) even establish police forces and arm the militias that are there."¹⁸⁹

Jordan

Some analysts believed that a limited number of insurgents were crossing into Iraq from Iraq-Jordan border. Most Arab Jordanians are very much opposed to the rise of a Shi'ite dominated Iraq.

While commentators focus on the fact that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was a Jordanian, it should be noted that the Jordanian government has sentenced Zarqawi to death in absentia on multiple occasions. Though there may be some Jordanians involved in the insurgency, Jordan has been very cooperative in its efforts to train Iraqi police and to monitor its borders.

The Jordanian government has trained a good number of the Iraqi security forces and is very much concerned with extreme Islamist elements within its own territory. King Abdullah has pledged to train over 30,000 Iraqi military and police within Jordan and on January 13, 2005, the 12th class graduated its training bringing the total to almost 10,000 Iraqi security forces trained in Jordan since efforts began.¹⁹⁰ There have, however, been incidents involving insurgents and terrorists within Jordan's borders. In spring 2004, a plot to create a massive chemical-laced explosion over Amman by radical Islamists was uncovered and disrupted by the Jordanian security forces.

On August 19, 2005, Katyusha rockets were fired at two U.S. warships in Jordan's Red Sea Aqaba port. None of the rockets struck the ship. One hit a warehouse, killing a Jordanian soldier; another exploded near a Jordanian hospital, resulting in no casualties; and the third landed outside of Eilat airport in neighboring Israel, but failed to explode. The Iraqi branch of Al Qa'ida, linked to Jordanian Abu Masab al-Zarqawi, claimed responsibility for the attack. Four days later, Jordanian officials arrested a Syrian man, Mohammed Hassan Abdullah al-Sihly, who they accused of carrying out the attack. Police said three accomplices slipped across the border into Iraq.¹⁹¹ Jordanian Interior Minister Awni Yirfas confirmed his government was working with Iraqi authorities in order to capture the militants.¹⁹²

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.¹⁹³

A Jordanian, Raad Mansour al-Banna, is the main suspect in the suicide bombing of a police recruitment site in Hilla in February 2005, killing more than 125.¹⁹⁴ On August 21, 2005, Laith Kubba, spokesman for Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, accused Jordan of allowing the family of Saddam Hussein to finance the insurgent campaign in Iraq in an effort to reestablish the Ba'ath Party in that country.¹⁹⁵

As already discussed, none of the bombers involved in the November 9 hotel bombings in Amman were Jordanian, but rather Iraqi nationals. It is possible that Zarqawi drew on his own connections in Jordan to carry out the attacks. There are some 400,000 Iraqis living in Jordan, some of whom have ties to neo-Salafi extremists in Iraq and might be willing to help carry out operations in Jordan. Jordanian officials, including King Abdullah II, have refused to rule out the possibility that Jordanians may have been involved in the attacks. In the days following the bombings, Jordanian security officials arrested 12 suspects, mostly Jordanians and Iraqis.

Turkey

The Kurdish issue in Northern Iraq has two major implications for Turkey. First, Ankara is concerned about activities of Kurdish separatist groups in Northern Iraq, whose chief objective is an independent Kurdistan in and around Turkey. Turkey is engaging in heavy diplomacy with both the US and Iraqi administrations to crack down on these organizations and eliminate the Kurdish rebels which were launching attacks into Turkish territory. This long-standing concern is the primary reason for the presence of Turkish intelligence and military units in Northern Iraq since the Gulf Operation.

Second, Turkey has consistently opposed strong autonomy for a Kurdish zone within Iraq, out of the fear that it would create unrest and aspirations for independence among Turkey's own Kurdish population. Given the rich water supplies in the Kurdish populated regions of Turkey and the colossal irrigation project (the Southeast Anatolian Project) that Turkey has invested in for over four decades, an autonomous Turkish Kurdistan is out of the question for Turkish policy-makers.

In summer 2005, Kurdish PKK rebels launched a series of attacks on Turkish forces allegedly from bases in northern Iraq. In two months, more than 50 Turkish security forces were killed in attacks, mostly in the form of planted IEDs, a weapon utilized widely by Iraqi insurgents.

In July 2005, the Turkish Prime Minister threatened cross-border action against the rebels if the attacks did not stop, though such action is generally regarded as extremely provocative and even illegal. Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated, however, that "There are certain things that international law allows. When necessary, one can carry out cross border operations. I hope that such a need will not emerge."¹⁹⁶

Exacerbating the debate about cross border operations were the conflicting reports that the US, who considers the PKK a terrorist organization, had ordered the Turkish military to capture the organization's leaders. A member of the Turkish military 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."¹⁹⁷

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.

Iran

The role Iran plays in the Iraqi insurgency is highly controversial. Citing Iranian sources, a *Time* magazine article stated that the Supreme National Security Council of Iran concluded in September 2002, before the U.S. invasion, that "It is necessary to adopt an active policy in order to prevent long-term and short-term dangers to Iran."¹⁹⁸

Iran certainly has active ties to several key Shi'ite political parties. These include key elements in the Shi'ite-based United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) that emerged as Iraq's most important political coalition in the January and December 2005 elections: the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), Al-Da'wa and Al-Da'wa - Tanzim al-Iraq. The Revolutionary Guard and Iranian intelligence have been active in southern Iraq, as well as other areas, since the early 1980s. They almost certainly have a network of active agents in Iraq at present. There are also some indications that Lebanese Hezbollah has established a presence in Iraq.¹⁹⁹

Prime Minister Allawi repeatedly expressed his concern over Iran's actions during 2004 and early 2005, as did other senior officials in the Interim Iraqi Government who see Iran as a direct and immediate threat.

Iraqi interim Defense Minister Hazem Sha'alan 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 Shi'ite who is one of Iran's most outspoken critics in Iraq -- added that the Iranians "are fighting us because we want to build freedom and democracy, and they want to build an Islamic dictatorship and have turbaned clerics to rule in Iraq."²⁰⁰ Sha'alan made several points in a briefing on September 22, 2004:

- Iranian intervention and support of Sadr pose major threats; and some infiltration has taken place across the Syria border.
- Iran is behind Sadr. It uses Iranian pilgrims and sends arms, money, and drugs across the border.

Iraq must have strong border 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*].”²⁰¹

In contrast, King Abdullah of Jordan has made a wide range of charges about Iranian interference in Iraq and went so far as to charge during the period before the Iraqi election that Iran was attempting to rig Iraq’s election with up to 1,000,000 false registrations. He has since talked about the risk of an Iraqi-Syrian-Lebanese Shi’ite "axis" or "crescent."

In an extraordinary interview aired on Iraqi TV on January 14, 2005, Muayed Al-Nasseri, commander of Saddam Hussein’s “Army of Muhammad,” 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.”²⁰²

On October 13, the Iraqi Interior Ministry announced that Iraqi security forces had arrested 10 Iranian “infiltrators” trying to enter the country illegally. A total of 88 suspected insurgents were arrested in the raid, including one Somali citizen. Iraqi security forces also seized a number of weapons and ammunition caches.²⁰³ In a similar incident in July 2005, Iraqi border guards exchanged fire with gunmen crossing into Iraq from Iran. The Iraqi security forces also uncovered a cache of explosives, timers and detonators.²⁰⁴ Such incidents, in addition to growing allegations of Iranian involvement by Baghdad and Washington, suggest that Iran may have moved from having the ability to create unrest and violence in Iraq to actively supporting insurgents.

According to what several newspapers claim are classified intelligence reports, British intelligence officials suspect insurgents led by Abu Mustafa al-Sheibani are responsible for the deaths of at least 11 British soldiers in southern Iraq.²⁰⁵ An investigation of Iranian involvement in Iraq in August of 2005 by *Time Magazine* identified al-Sheibani as the leader of the insurgency in the south. According to the magazine, the IRGC had been instrumental in creating the al-Sheibani group and providing it with weapons and training. US intelligence officials also believe the group, estimated to number almost 300 militants, is responsible for at least 37 bombs against US troops in 2005 alone.²⁰⁶ British officials accused a second Tehran-backed militia group, the Mujahedeen for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (MIRI), of having killed six British Royal Military Police in Majar el-Kabir in 2003.²⁰⁷

In early October 2005, the British government publicly blamed Iran for the deaths of eight British soldiers in southern Iraq. Although British officials had complained to Tehran about ongoing arms smuggling across the porous Iran-Iraq border earlier in the year, this marked the first time London officially implicated Tehran in the deaths of Coalition troops. British officials accused Iran’s Revolutionary Guard of supplying advanced technology-“shaped charges” capable of penetrating even the toughest armor to insurgents in Iraq, and of trying to further destabilize the country.²⁰⁸ Echoing British accusations, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld stated that some weapons found in Iraq have “clearly [and] unambiguously” originated from Iran.²⁰⁹

A number of experts believe that Tehran-backed militias have infiltrated Iraqi security forces. In September 2005, Iraq’s National Security Adviser, Mouwafak al-Rubaie, admitted that insurgents had penetrated Iraqi police forces in many parts of the country, but refused to speculate about the extent of the infiltration.²¹⁰

Some reports suggest that between 70 and 90 percent of Basra's police force has been infiltrated by religious and political factions. The Mahdi Army in particular, is believed to have almost de facto control over the police. Not surprisingly, corruption and violence is on the rise within the force. More than 1,300 murders were documented in Basra during the first nine months of 2005, many of them allegedly by men in police uniform.²¹¹ A second Tehran-backed group, the Badr Brigades, controlled the city's bureau of internal affairs up until Spring 2005.²¹² All in a city not considered an al-Sadr stronghold, an individual frequently associated with these groups.

There are also reports of Iranian backed-groups exerting influence over the lives of everyday Iraqis. Achieving a government job in Basra today is almost impossible without the sponsorship of one of these groups. Teaching posts in local schools and universities are increasingly filled only by those deemed ideologically loyal to Iran.²¹³ Iranian goods flood local markets and Farsi is becoming the area's second language.²¹⁴

The increasing frequency of such reports in the summer and fall of 2005 led some US and British officials to conclude that Iran was backing the insurgency in southern Iraq. The exact level of Iranian influence over the Iraqi insurgency is still unknown however. Whether the Tehran regime, or elements of it, is encouraging or merely allowing attacks against Coalition troops stationed in southern Iraq is unclear.

It should be noted, however, that Iran has repeatedly denied these charges. Some American experts are more concerned with the potential role Iran could play in any Iraqi civil conflict, or its influence over a Shi'ite political majority in office, than with direct Iranian support of a Shi'ite insurgency.

As General George Casey put it, "I don't see substantial Iranian influence on this particular government that will be elected in January. I see Iran as more of a longer-term threat to Iraqi security...a long-term threat to stability in Iraq. If you look on the other side, I think Syria is a short-term threat, because of the support they provide to Ba'athist leaders operating inside and outside of Iraq."²¹⁵

The nature of Iranian involvement in Iraqi politics is multifaceted. Many of the Iraqi exile groups and militia members that lived in Iran before the fall of Saddam Hussein were never particularly grateful to Iran during the time they had to remain in exile and are not pro-Iranian now. The Ayatollah Sistani, Iraq's pre-eminent Shi'ite religious leader -- as well as virtually all of the influential Iraqi clergy except Sadr -- 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 an Ayatollah-like figure. Iran's aims in Iraq may not be to secure a religious theocracy akin to its own, but merely to assure a Shi'ite backed Baghdad government friendly to Tehran.

The analysis of the International Crisis Group, and of many US experts in and outside Iraq interviewed for this report do not support the existence of any major Iranian effort to destabilize or control Iraq through June 2005.²¹⁶ However, the present and future uncertainties surrounding Iran's role can scarcely be ignored. Iran does seem to have tolerated an Al Qa'ida presence in Iran, or at least its transit through the country, as a means of putting pressure on the US in spite

of the organization's hostility toward Shi'ites. Iran may have been active in supporting groups like Al Ansar in the past, or at least turning a blind eye, and may allow cross border infiltration in Iraq's Kurdish region now.

In July 2005, Kurdish intelligence officials asserted that Ansar was based primarily in Iran and that attacks in the Kurdish areas could only have occurred with Iranian support. According to an Iraqi Kurdish reporter, the Iranian cities of Mahabad and Saqqiz are centers where Ansar recruited among the Iranian Kurds. Such claims cannot be independently verified.

Iran has not been, and never will be, passive in dealing with Iraq. For example, it sent a top-level official, Kamal Kharrazi, to Iraq on May 17, 2005 -- only 48 hours after Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had left the country. Kharrazi met with Prime Minister al-Jaafari and Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari. He also met with other top officials and key members of the Shi'ite parties. His visit was at a minimum a demonstration of Iran's influence in an Iraq governed by a Shi'ite majority, even though some key Iraqi Shi'a parties like Al Dawa have scarcely been strong supporters of Iran. Kharrazi also gave an important message at his press conference, "...the party that will leave Iraq is the United States because it will eventually withdraw...But the party that will live with the Iraqis is Iran because it is a neighbor to Iraq."²¹⁷

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.²¹⁸

Several high level meetings between Iraqi and Iranian officials took place in the fall of 2005. Iraq's deputy minister, Ahmed Chalabi met with Iranian officials in Tehran only days before traveling to the United States to meet with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. The timing was seen by many as odd given accusations in May 2004 by US officials that Chalabi gave Iran classified information.²¹⁹

In mid-November, Iraq's National Security Adviser Mowaffaq al-Rubaie traveled to Tehran. While there, he signed a memorandum of understanding with the Iranian government committing the two governments to cooperate on sensitive intelligence-sharing matters, counter-terrorism and cross-border infiltration of Qa'ida figures. The agreement took Washington by surprise: US Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad told reporters he found out about the agreement only afterward.²²⁰

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani traveled to Iran in late November, becoming the first Iraqi head of state to do so in almost four decades. Talabani spent three days in Iran and met with both Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Rubaie, who accompanied Talabani on the trip, told reporters he asked the Iranians to use their influence with Damascus to secure Syrian cooperation in sealing off the Iraqi border to insurgents.²²¹ In their meeting, Khamenei told Talabani that foreign troops were to blame for the ongoing violence and urged the Iraqi president to tell the occupiers to go: "The presence of foreign troops is damaging

for the Iraqis, and the Iraqi government should ask for their departure by proposing a timetable...the US and Britain will eventually have to leave Iraq with a bitter experience.”²²²

According to Talabani, Khamenei promised to support the Iraqi president’s efforts to end the insurgency. With regard to Iraq, Khamenei told the official IRNA news agency: “Your security is our own security and Iran honors Iraq’s independence and power...We will extend assistance to you in those fields.” But Khamenei made a point of denying any responsibility for the violence next door, saying: “Iran considers the United States to be responsible for all crimes and terrorist acts in Iraq and the suffering and misery of the Iraqi people.”²²³

Another high-profile Iraqi visit to Tehran took place on November 27 by Vice-President Adel Abdul-Mahdi. Abdul-Mahdi met with his Iranian counterpart, Vice President for Executive Affairs Ali Saeedlou to discuss the implementation of accords reached earlier in the month. Together, these visits seemed to mark a sign of improving relations between the two countries in late 2005.

As mentioned above, Iran’s influence in Iraq is not just of a political or military nature, but economic as well. In addition to Iranian government aid allotted for reconstruction, Iranian businessmen have reportedly invested heavily in restoring their neighbor’s infrastructure. Nonprofit groups headquartered in Iran also helped to provide basic services to Iraqis during the chaos that followed the toppling of Saddam and dissolution of the Ba’athist government. One NGO established in Tehran with ties to the Iranian government, “Reconstruction of the Holy Shrines of Iraq,” claims that it has completed more than 300 construction, cultural and religious projects in the country. Another group, the Organization of Ahl-ul-Bait, whose leadership is comprised of Iranian mullahs, has sent ambulances, doctors and teachers into Iraq.²²⁴

New complaints regarding Iranian interference in Iraq were leveled again in March by Secretary Rumsfeld, who accused Iran of deploying its Revolutionary Guard to Iraq. He said that Iran was “putting people into Iraq to do things that are harmful to the future of Iraq,” and that it was something that Tehran would “look back on as having been an error in judgment.”²²⁵ That same month, President Bush asserted that “Tehran has been responsible for at least some of the increasing lethality of anti-coalition attacks by providing Shi’a militia with the capabilities to build improvised explosive devices in Iraq.”²²⁶

U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad made similar allegations. He accused Iran of publicly supporting Iraq’s political process while it clandestinely trained and aided Shi’ite militia groups as well as Sunni insurgent organizations such as Ansar al-Sunna. He stated that, “Our judgment is that training and supplying, direct or indirect, takes place, and that there is also provision of financial resources to people, to militias, and that there is a presence of people associated with the Revolutionary Guard and with MOIS.”²²⁷

Khalilzad comments came as the U.S. and Iran announced that they had agreed to hold direct talks for the first time on how to reduce the violence in Iraq. These talks, scheduled to take place in Iraq, were at the request of SCIRI leader, Abdul al-Hakim, who had solicited Iranian assistance in the past. Ambassador Khalilzad, who had also reached out to Tehran’s leaders, was to receive the Iranian negotiators when they arrived.²²⁸

Both sides came to the talks with minimal expectations. In addition, U.S. officials remained adamant that the discussions would be narrowly focused on Iraqi security issues and would not

include the Iranian nuclear program. In statements leading up to the talks, it appeared Tehran saw them as an opportunity to change Washington's behavior, while the U.S. indicated that Iran's desire to meet was an indication that it was realizing that its defiant posture was not working.

Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani, made the announcement to the Iranian parliament saying "I think Iraq is a good testing ground for America to take a hard look at the way it acts...If there's a determination in America to take that hard look, then we're prepared to help." He went on to indicate that Iran was willing to help the U.S. in Iraq, but only under the condition that the "United States should respect the vote of the people. Their Army must not provoke from behind the scenes."²²⁹

Yet U.S. officials such as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice emphasized that the negotiations would only focus on Iraq. National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley added optimistically, however, that Iran was "finally beginning to listen."²³⁰

The announcement of these negotiations drew a strong condemnation from The Iraqi Consensus Front, Iraq's dominant Sunni political party. In a statement it called the negotiations "an obvious unjustified interference," and added "It's not up to the American ambassador to talk to Iran about Iraq."²³¹

Iran faces a dilemma. It benefits from US support for Iraq to help it deal with the insurgency and provide economic aid. Yet, it fears being "encircled" by the US presence in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Gulf. Iranian officials have threatened to destabilize Iraq if the US brings military pressure against Iran because of its alleged nuclear weapons program. A split in Iraq's government could lead some Shi'ite factions to actively turn to Iran for support, and the divisions in Iran's government create the ongoing risk that hard-line elements might intervene in Iraq even if its government did not fully support such action. In early 2006, however, these seemed to be risks rather than realities.

Syria

Both senior US and Iraqi officials feel that Syria may overtly agree to try to halt any support of the insurgency, but allow Islamic extremist groups to recruit young men, have them come to Syria, and then cross the border into Iraq – where substantial numbers have become suicide bombers. They also feel Syria has allowed senior ex-Ba'athist cadres to operate from Syria, helping to direct the Sunni insurgency. As has been touched upon earlier, these include top level officials under Saddam Hussein such as Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri, one of Saddam's Vice Presidents.

General George Casey, the commander of the Multi-National Force (MNF), has been careful not to exaggerate the threat of foreign interference. Nevertheless, Casey has warned that Syria has allowed Iraqi supporters of Saddam Hussein to provide money, supplies, and direction to Sunni insurgents, and continues to be a serious source of infiltration by foreign volunteers.²³² General Casey highlighted Syria's complicity in this regard when testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee on March 8, 2005.²³³

There are former regime leaders who come and go from Syria, who operate out of Syria, and they do planning, and they provide resources to the insurgency in Iraq. I have no hard evidence that the Syrian government is actually complicit with those people, but we certainly have evidence that people at low levels with the Syrian government know that they're there and what they're up to.

The US State Department spokesman described Syria's role as follows in the late spring of 2005:²³⁴

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.

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.²³⁵

There have also been reports that Zarqawi obtained most of his new young volunteers through Syria, and that they were recruited and transited in ways that had to be known to Syrian intelligence. There had also been media reports that Zarqawi's top lieutenants, and perhaps Zarqawi himself, met in Syria for planning sessions.²³⁶ 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.²³⁷

US Central Command director of intelligence, Brigadier General John Custer acknowledged in July 2005 the moves that Syria had made as well as the problems in patrolling the border. Custer stated that Syria had bolstered the forces along the eastern border with units relocated from Lebanon. In comments that seemed to contradict what other intelligence officials had said, Custer stated:²³⁸

I think Syria is intent on assisting the US in Iraq... [I have] no information, intelligence or anything credible [that Syria] is involved or facilitating in any way [the flow of insurgents into Iraq]. . . Could they do more? Yes. Are they doing more? Yes. They are working very hard. As troops have been pulled out of Lebanon, we've seen some of those troops go to the border. I am convinced that they are not only doing it along the border but are arresting people as they transit.

The British military attaché in Damascus, Colonel Julian Lyne-Pirkis, inspected the Syrian efforts at the border and agreed with Custer's assessment. Custer suggested that the security environment on the border was a combination of a tradition of lawlessness and lack of Syrian ability to police the area, creating a greater impression of Syrian complicity than there actually was. He stated, "It's not a question of intent—it's simply capacity and capability. You've got a

600-kilometer border there, some of the toughest desert, and you have a thousand-year-old culture of smuggling. Smuggling men now is no different than smuggling men a 1,000 years ago. It's all a smuggling economy."²³⁹ 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 beam. 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 Alawite minority). However, such a view, analysts say, is extremely near-sighted as it is quite possible that extremists in Iraq could cross back into Syria, bringing practical guerilla warfare experience with them much like the Mujahedeen who fought in the Afghan war brought back to their countries of origin. Such hardened and trained militants could then pose a very serious threat to the ruling regime. As one commentator stated, "They [militants and Syria] may have slept in the same bed to fight the Americans, but what's important for al Qa'ida is that it has entered the bedroom [Syria] and secured a foothold there."²⁴⁰

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."²⁴¹ The studies sought to compare the returning Mujahedeen from Afghanistan to those who fought in Iraq. Like Syria, those countries could be threatened by the fighters who return with advanced warfare skills.²⁴² 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.²⁴³

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."²⁴⁴

Washington's warnings to Damascus over border security intensified during the fall of 2005. On October 7, Syrian President Bashar Assad told the pan-Arab newspaper *Al Hayat*: "They (Americans) have no patrols at the border, not a single American or Iraqi on their side of the border...We cannot control the border from one side."²⁴⁵ Assad's comments came a day after President Bush and Prime Minister Blair both issued renewed warnings against continued Syrian and Iranian involvement in Iraqi affairs, specifically their roles in giving shelter to Islamic extremists.

A senior US official also suggested that the war might have spread beyond Iraq's borders, telling the *Financial Times* "We are concerned that Syria is allowing its territory to be part of the Iraqi battlefield. That's a choice the Syrians made. We think that is an unwise choice."²⁴⁶ In his interview with *Al Hayat*, Assad said the absence of security along the border was hurting Syria and maintained "controlling it will help Syria because the chaos in Iraq affects us." Assad said

his country had arrested more than 1,300 infiltrators from Iraq since the war began.²⁴⁷ The following day, Assistant Secretary of State David Welch responded by saying the US was “ask[ing] the Syrian government not to interfere in such matters.” Welch went on to say, “It appears that they are not listening and it seems this behavior is not changing.”²⁴⁸ The rhetorical exchanges, however, did not prevent the Syrian Airlines Company from flying its inaugural post-Saddam era flight between Damascus and Baghdad on October 11. It was the first regular flight to operate between the two capitals in a quarter of a century.²⁴⁹

At the same time, the insurgents do not need major shipments of arms. Virtually anyone can go in and out, moving money and small critical supplies, and volunteers can simply enter as ordinary visitors without equipment. US Customs and Border Protection officers are working to train their Iraqi counterparts and have had moderate success in detaining potential insurgents and arms suppliers, and in breaking up smuggling rings. Another US CBP team of officers and border agents was deployed in Iraq on February 1, 2005, to assist further in the training of Iraqis.

This may help, but Iraq’s border security forces have so far been some of its most ineffective units. Many of its new forts are abandoned and other units that have remained exhibit minimal activity. Yet, even if Iraq’s border forces were ready and its neighbors actively helped, border security would still be a problem, in part because they are often vast, uninhabited areas.

This illustrates a general problem for both Iraq and its neighbors. Iraq’s borders total 3,650 kilometers in length. Its border with Iran is 1,458 kilometers, with Jordan 181 kilometers, with Kuwait 240 kilometers, with Saudi Arabia 814 kilometers, with Syria 605 kilometers, and with Turkey 352 kilometers. Most of these borders are desert, desolate territory, easily navigable water barriers, or mountains. Even Iraq’s small 58-kilometer coastline is in an area with considerable small craft and shipping traffic, which presents security problems.

Syria has an Alawite-led regime that is more Shi’ite than Sunni, and while it sees its support of Sunni insurgents as a way of weakening the potential threat from a US presence in Syria, it also maintains ties to Shi’ite factions as well. While it may tolerate and encourage former Iraqi Ba’athist operations in Syria, and transit by Islamist extremists, Syria also maintains ties to elements of formerly Iranian-backed Iraqi Shi’ite groups like the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), Al-Da’wa and Al-Da’wa - Tanzim al-Iraq that it first developed during the Iran-Iraq War. Syria’s crack down on fighters passing into Iraq through its borders, an effort praised by US military officials, was likely the result of broader national security interests and concerns about regime stability.²⁵⁰ Indeed, despite speculation that the Syrian government was on the brink of reform, indications in early 2006 suggested quite the opposite.

Far from opening the Ba’ath dominated rule to a multiparty system, Syria implemented new oppressive measures against political opponents and sought methods to co-opt religious elements of society. Fearing the gathering momentum of Islamic political parties such as Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood—each of whom had electoral victories in Palestine and Egypt respectively—the Ba’ath party of Syria attempted to head-off similar challenges in its state by allowing religious figures a greater role in government and giving them a freer hand to conduct their business among their followers so long as it does not attempt to rival the Syrian government.²⁵¹

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⁸ Estimate based on recent reporting and Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1989, Washington, GPO, 1990, Table I.

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¹⁸ The U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) estimated on June 4, 1991, that 100,000 Iraqi soldiers died, 300,000 were wounded, 150,000 deserted, and 60,000 were taken prisoners of war. DIA noted, however, that these estimates could be 50% or more in error. (Department of Defense Press release, June 6, 1991.) Later studies have steadily reduced the number of killed and wounded and increased the number of deserted. These estimates do not include losses in the Shi'ite and Kurdish uprisings that followed the cease-fire.

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