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Iraq's Sectarian and Ethnic Violence and the Evolving Insurgency

Developments through late-January 2007

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Executive Summary

The insurgency in Iraq has become a “war after the war” that threatens to divide the country and create a full-scale civil conflict. It has triggered sectarian and ethnic violence that dominates the struggle to reshape Iraq as a modern state, has emerged as a growing threat to the Gulf region, and has become linked to the broader struggle between Sunni and Shi’ite Islamist extremism, and moderation and reform, throughout the Islamic world.

Since its inception in the spring of 2003, the nature of the fighting in Iraq has evolved from a struggle between Coalition forces and former regime loyalists to a much more diffuse conflict, involving a number of Sunni groups, Shi’ite militias, and foreign jihadists, and which has spread to become a widespread civil conflict.

In the process, the complex patterns of conflict in Iraq have become a broad struggle for sectarian and ethnic control of political and economic space. Open violence has become steadily more serious, but it is only part of the story. Shi’ite, Sunni, and Kurdish factions increasingly organize to provide local security while seeking to push other factions out of areas where they have the majority. These problems have been compounded by de facto exclusion of many ex-Ba’ath members and professionals that form the secular and nationalist core of the country, and the slow purging of other nationalists who do not take a sectarian and ethnic side from Ministries and professions.

The War for Sectarian and Ethnic Control of Space

Killing and casualties are only part of this story. The map of sectarian and ethnic violence is far broader than the major incidents of violence reported by the MNF-I and Iraqi government. There are no accurate or reliable counts of such dead and wounded because they cannot be counted with any reliability even in the Baghdad area. However, a count kept by the Associated Press estimated that 13,738 Iraqis – civilians and security forces - died violently in 2006. The UN reported that 34,452 Iraqi civilians died in 2006. Groups like Iraq Body Count reported that a total of roughly 56,000 Iraqis civilians died since 2003. At the extremes, a Lancet study based on a highly uncertain methodology and sampling method estimated that 650,000 Iraqis have died since 2003.

Tragic as such estimates are, other forms of “cleansing” have become at least as important as major overt acts of violence. Shi’ites and Sunnis, and Arabs and Kurds, seek to dominate the other side or push the weaker side out of areas where they have the majority or have superior power. These forms of “soft” ethnic cleansing include threats, physical intimidation, blackmail, seizure of property, raids on homes and businesses, use of checkpoints to push other factions out, kidnappings and extortion, misuse of government offices and police, and disappearances.

Maps of Baghdad and other major cities with mixed populations show a steady separation of the population on sectarian and ethnic lines, and reflect the efforts of the dominant side to push the other out or exclude it. Another measure of the level of conflict which goes beyond the data on killings is the number of refugees. At the end of 2006, the UN reported that there were 1.7 million internally displaced Iraqis since 2003, with an average of 45,000 Iraqis leaving their homes every month.

In spite of Coalition forces’ initiatives to stem the violence, train Iraqi forces, and build public faith in political institutions, ethnic and sectarian tensions continued to push the country deeper

into civil war. The February 22, 2006 bombing of the Golden Mosque was only the most visible symbol of a pattern of Sunni-Shi'ite clashes that began in 2003, steadily grew in 2004 and 2005, and became a major civil conflict in 2006. Different factions built up their militias, and infiltrated the new Iraqi security forces. Shi'ite militias became the primary challenge facing the Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, and the Shi'ite community itself fragmented into rivaling parties.

Sectarian fighting in Baghdad and surrounding urban areas between Shi'ite militias and loosely organized Sunni armed groups – with ties to terrorist groups or ex-Ba'athists – produced the most openly violent signs of civil conflict. Al-Qa'ida in Iraq operated out of Anbar province and sought to unite the various Sunni insurgent groups. Tensions between Kurds, Arabs, and Turcomans intensified the ethnic dimension of the war and violent inter-Shi'ite rivalries in the south threatened to divide the majority. Ultimately, these developments had the effect of blurring the distinction between the threat of an insurgency and that of a civil war.

In the process, sectarian and ethnic divisions have expanded from struggles by extremists and activists to actions by popular movements with a steadily broader base. While most Iraqis still express support for national unity in public opinion polls, the base for violence and cleansing expanded to include more and more of the population in areas where there was sectarian and ethnic tension and violence. This is particularly true where militias and local security forces provide the only real local security, where young men have little employment, and where the struggle for control of villages, cities, and neighborhoods has become a struggle for housing, businesses, and the ability to conduct a normal life.

Key Trends in the Winter of 2006 - 2007

In the winter of 2006 - 2007 Iraqis faced continued high levels of violence, and growing pressures for sectarian and ethnic separation, carried out both by a tangled set of warring factions and various local and national political leaders. As the nature of the civil struggle became more complex, the prospects for national reconciliation grew less probable. Changes in the dynamics of the fighting, the struggle for political and economic space, and the character of the insurgency and civil conflict, largely centered on the following set of emerging trends:

- Broad struggles existed in most of the country with mixed populations for control or dominance by Shi'ite, Sunni, and Kurdish factions, often driving out smaller minorities or suppressing them. This series of struggles was difficult to map or quantify, but affected virtually every governorate. Kurd-Arab struggles were particularly important in the north near Kirkuk, the northern oil fields, to the east of Mosul, and in areas with a Turcoman population. Sectarian cleansing continued to be a major problem in the Basra areas and in many towns and villages, and rural areas throughout the country with mixed Sunni and Shi'ite populations.
- The leaders of Iraq's central government still publicly sought national unity and conciliation, and the Maliki government publicly supported President Bush in a new strategy designed to defeat both Sunni and Shi'ite extremists. Key Shi'ite leaders; however, seemed to prepare more and more for the prospect of seeking Shi'ite dominance in a struggle with Arab Sunnis. Kurdish leaders showed growing concern over Kurdish rights and autonomy, and Sunni leaders who participated in the political process showed more and more fear as they faced a breakdown of conciliation and compromise and future conflict with Shi'ites. The Ministries of the government increasingly divided their personnel and spending efforts along sectarian and ethnic lines and often by party. Similar favoritism, purges, and control of spending affected government activity at the governorate and local level, compounded by massive corruption, nepotism, and personal favoritism.

- Sectarian fighting, led by the growth of some 23 militias around Baghdad, was particularly violent and the resulting killings were easiest to map and quantify.¹ Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army developed rogue components that acted outside of his command. Sunnis formed loosely organized neighborhood death squads in the urban areas, some with ties to al-Qai'da or ex-Ba'athist groups.
- Baghdad and other major cities were increasingly divided into sectarian strongholds as both Sunnis and Shi'a fled neighborhoods in which they were a minority. Soft ethnic cleansing created 1.7 million internally displaced persons by the end of 2006, according to the United Nations. Adhamiya and Kadhamiya were described as the most sensitive areas in Baghdad because they both lay in the "opposite" sectarian area. Other disputed towns included the Shi'ite city of Samarra – located a mainly Sunni area – and the Sunni cities of Yusifiya, Mahmudiya, and Iskandariya, which lay in the Shi'ite south.²
- The Sunni Arab insurgency was still concentrated in Anbar province, but attacks in Baghdad, Balad Ruz, and Mosul showed the wide extent of their impact, and the level of violence grew in governorates like Diyala. US and Iraqi forces made some progress in Falluja, but Ramadi remained a contested city. After the death of al-Zarqawi, the Mujahedeen Shura Council sought to unify insurgent elements and created the Islamic State of Iraq – an intended eight province Sunni Arab autonomous region. In 2006, ten insurgent groups joined the Mujahedeen Council and Islamic State.³
- According to the Iraq Casualty Count, 115 US soldiers died in December, but if killed and wounded are counted, the overall trend in US casualties was roughly equally high in the last four months of 2006. According to Iraqi government sources, December was also the deadliest for Iraqi civilians with 1,927 dying violently. The Health Ministry reported that 22,950 Iraqi civilian and security forces died violently in 2006. The United Nation's figure for civilians killed in Iraq was 34,452. The Department of Defense report "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" for August-November stated that total attacks rose 22% from the previous reporting period, making for an average of 960 attacks a week. Overall, 55% of all attacks occurred in Baghdad and Anbar Provinces.
- The Shi'ite community was increasingly divided along party and militia lines, although the individual parties had their own divisions by leader and many elements of the militias operated on their own or outside any clear central hierarchy controlled by the party leadership. For example, armed elements of al-Sadr's Mahdi Army clashed with Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) supporters in Samawah, Muthanna Province in late December, and US intelligence experts observed numerous incidents indicating that local militia leaders, particularly in the Mahdi Army, operated on their own and with little regard to the central leadership.
- Turkey pledged their support for the minority Turcoman population in Iraq and urged Iraq to take action against PKK rebel activity in the Kurdish north.
- Regional players, particularly Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iran, and Turkey were increasingly concerned about the spread of civil war across the region.

Little Progress in the Search for Conciliation

On the political front, the government of Prime Minister al-Maliki was unable to make major progress in the reconciliation dialogue amid the security crisis. Maliki continued to pursue a political solution to the crisis, and indicated he would seek to control the Shi'ite militias, including that of al-Sadr. The Prime Minister, and other key leaders like Hakim, however, placed most of the blame for Iraq's violence on the Sunni insurgents, clearly favored the Shi'ite cause, and were open less optimistic about reconciliation than they had been in the past. Tensions between Sunni and Shi'ite legislators remained heightened as both sects accused each other of propagating sectarian killings by supporting death squads.

Intra-Shi'ite tensions were a key factor limiting political progress. SCIRI, led by Hakim, differed from Moqtada al-Sadr on the key issues of federalism, oil distribution, and views of the coalition

forces. SCIRI loyalists in parliament engaged in efforts to reduce Sadr's political power and influence over Prime Minister Maliki.

A National Reconciliation Conference took place on December 16, but key players were absent and the dialogue had little effect. Sadr's bloc boycotted parliament from mid December until late January, and Sadr loyalists demonstrated against the US and Iraqi operations aimed at Mahdi Army members. Al-Maliki did announce the cabinet positions that would be reshuffled, which included health, transportation, culture, woman's affairs, and tourism. Members of the Iraqi Parliament also stated that they were near a compromise on the crucial oil law.

Political negotiations failed to find a solution to the violence, but the US continued to hand over control of security operations to Iraqi Security Forces. On December 20 the US handed over control of Najaf province to Iraq. The original target goal for Iraqi security forces, 325,000, was reached, but many had deserted, were on unauthorized leave, were not operational, or had died in the violence. Maliki authorized the addition of at least 30,000 forces. US and Iraqi officials also announced an initiative to rein in the 150,000 man Facilities Protection Service, which had Shi'ite sectarian alliances. The British faced a setback in training efforts in Basra where they raided and disbanded the Serious Crimes Unit. The police recruits numbered 600 in Ramadi, Anbar Province in December - the largest number to date.

A National Struggle, not one for Control of Baghdad

While much of the US and MNF-I reporting concentrated on Baghdad as the center of the sectarian conflict, violence spread to surrounding towns as the civil war threatened to engulf the entire country. Sectarian violence in the Diyala province escalated and closed down the provincial capital of Baquba. Violence also increased in the northern cities of Mosul and Kirkuk during the reporting period between Shi'a, Sunni, and Kurds.

According to polls included in the Department of Defense "Measuring Security and Stability in Iraq" report for August – November 2006 Iraqi public opinion fell of the government's ability to improve security conditions. The degree to which respondents felt safe was related to sectarian composition of their province; citizens in mixed areas such as Baghdad and Mosul were less likely to feel safe than individuals in Maysan Province.

The widespread violence in the country made economic conditions continue to deteriorate. Iraqis faced a severe fuel crisis, joblessness, high inflation rates, and a burgeoning black market. Oil production remained below pre-invasion levels and electricity averaged less than 5 hours a day in Baghdad.⁴ Education, healthcare, and the rule of law continued to suffer. Several reports did point to positive economic growth in 2006.

The steady deterioration in Iraqi security and stability also forces changes in US strategy. President Bush announced changes in military and diplomatic command in Iraq as well as the new US strategy on January 10, 2007. He announced that he was sending an additional 17,500 US troops to Baghdad and 4,000 to Anbar Province. The troops would support the Iraqi security forces in stopping escalation to full scale civil war by securing the capital and engaging in an accelerated adviser effort to Iraqi forces. The President also committed additional US funds for reconstruction and the expansion of Provincial Reconstruction Teams. Finally, he gave the Iraqi government a set of political, economic and security benchmarks for 2007.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| THE “WAR AFTER THE WAR” | 8 |
| I. INTRODUCTION: DEVELOPMENTS THROUGH LATE-JANUARY 2007 | 9 |
| II. WORKING TOWARDS NATIONAL RECONCILIATION | 10 |
| Growing Divides: Segregating the Country | 11 |
| Political Answers to the Security Crisis? | 11 |
| Military Options and Political Failures | 15 |
| Doubts Arise about Prime Minister Maliki and the Government | 17 |
| Saddam Hussein’s Sentencing | 18 |
| III. THE RISING LEVEL OF CONFLICT | 20 |
| Defining the Conflict | 22 |
| Sectarian Displacement | 25 |
| IV. SECURITY INITIATIVES AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE INSURGENCY | 29 |
| Renewed Efforts in Baghdad | 29 |
| <i>Uncertain Iraqi and US Agreement</i> | 33 |
| A New Strategy for Diyala | 35 |
| Progress and Problems in Anbar Province | 37 |
| V. TRANSFERRING CONTROL TO IRAQI FORCES | 39 |
| VI. RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS: STUMBLING ON THE BUILDING BLOCKS | 43 |
| The Problems of Rule of Law and Corruption | 46 |
| Economic Indicators | 48 |
| The Problem of Education | 52 |
| The Problem of Healthcare | 52 |
| The Problem of Oil | 53 |
| The Problem of Electricity | 56 |
| VII. THE DOMINANT ROLE OF SHI’ITE MILITIAS | 59 |
| Internal Shi’ite Tensions | 59 |
| Sadr and the Mahdi Army | 60 |
| VIII. CHANGES IN THE NATURE OF THE SUNNI INSURGENCY | 63 |
| Evolving Tactics | 64 |
| <i>The Propaganda War</i> | 65 |
| <i>The War for Economic Space</i> | 66 |
| The Role of Foreign Volunteers | 67 |
| IX. THE KURDISH DIMENSION: DANGEROUSLY OVERLOOKED | 68 |
| The Problem of Resources | 69 |
| The Turkish Question | 69 |
| X. LOOKING AT THE NUMBERS: OVERALL ATTACK PATTERNS AND LEVELS OF VIOLENCE ... | 71 |
| Bombings | 77 |
| “Body Dumps” | 81 |
| Infrastructure Attacks | 82 |
| The Growing Threat of Snipers | 83 |
| Hotline Tips | 85 |
| Coalition/US Casualties | 86 |
| Iraqi Casualties | 91 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| <i>US/MNF-Iraq</i> | 91 |
| <i>Iraqi Government Sources</i> | 91 |
| <i>NGO Estimates</i> | 92 |
| XI. THE ROLE OF OUTSIDE STATES: ACCUSATIONS AROUND | 95 |
| Saudi Arabia | 96 |
| Syria..... | 96 |
| Iran..... | 96 |
| XII. VIEWS FROM THE IRAQI PUBLIC | 99 |
| Views on Security and the Role of the US..... | 99 |
| Views on the Iraqi Government..... | 100 |
| XIII. THE US ROLE IN IRAQ AND LESSONS OF WARFARE | 102 |
| ENDNOTES | 105 |

Table of Figures

| | |
|--|-----|
| Figure 1: Concern over Civil war: Breakdown of Provinces, November 2005 and October 2006..... | 24 |
| Figure 2: The Refugee/Internally Displaced Person Crisis in Iraq, 2007 | 28 |
| Figure 3: The Unready Judges the Unready: Provincial Security Transition Team Assessment..... | 45 |
| Figure 4: Hollow, Meaningless Economic “Gains”: IMF GDP Estimates and Projections, 2004-2008 | 51 |
| Figure 5: Oil Production, Million of Barrels per day: May 2006- January 2007..... | 55 |
| Figure 6: Average Daily Hours of Electrical Power per Province, October 2006 | 57 |
| Figure 7: Iraq Average Hours Electricity Received, December 2006-January 2007 | 58 |
| Figure 8: Average Weekly Attacks by Time Period: January 2004 – November 2006..... | 72 |
| Figure 9: Total Average Attacks by Province: May-November 2006 | 73 |
| Figure 10: Ethno-Sectarian Incidents and Executions, January – October 2006 | 74 |
| Figure 11: Average Significant Attacks in Major Iraqi Cities September 2005-November 2006 | 75 |
| Figure 12: Cumulative Summary of IED attacks and IEDs found in Baghdad, 2006 | 76 |
| Figure 13: US IED Deaths July 2003- January 2007..... | 80 |
| Figure 14: Attacks on Iraqi Oil and Gas Pipelines, Installations, and Personnel: June 2003-December 2006..... | 83 |
| Figure 15: Total Number of Civilian Tips across Iraq, June – December 2006 | 85 |
| Figure 16: Coalition Deaths By Month and Nationality: March 2003 to January 2007 | 87 |
| Figure 17: Coalition Casualties by Iraqi Governorate or Province..... | 88 |
| Figure 18: US Casualties in the Iraq War: Total Killed vs. Wounded, March 2003-January 2007..... | 89 |
| Figure 19: US Casualties in the Iraq War: Killed vs. Wounded, March 2003-January 2007 | 90 |
| Figure 20: Total Iraqi Security Force and Civilian Casualties by Month: January 2005-January 2007 | 93 |
| Figure 21: Civilian Casualties Reported by Baghdad Central Morgue and Iraqi Ministry of Health: January – December 2006..... | 94 |
| Figure 22: How Safe do you Feel in your Neighborhood? October 2006 | 100 |
| Figure 23: Confidence in the ability of the Iraqi Government to protect from threats, August and October 2006.... | 101 |

The “War After the War”

The insurgency in Iraq has become a “war after the war” that threatens to divide the country and create a full-scale civil conflict. It has triggered sectarian and ethnic violence that dominates the struggle to reshape Iraq as a modern state, has emerged as a growing threat to the Gulf region, and has become linked to the broader struggle between Sunni and Shi’ite Islamist extremism, and moderation and reform, throughout the Islamic world.

Since its inception in the spring of 2003, the nature of the fighting in Iraq has evolved from a struggle between Coalition forces and former regime loyalists to a much more diffuse conflict, involving a number of Sunni groups, Shi’ite militias, and foreign jihadists, and which has spread to become a widespread civil conflict.

The end result is that the complex patterns of conflict in Iraq have become a broad struggle for sectarian and ethnic control of political and economic space. Open violence has become steadily more serious, but it is only part of the story. Shi’ite, Sunni, and Kurdish factions increasingly organize to provide local security while seeking to push other factions out of areas where they have the majority. This drift towards sectarian and ethnic conflict has been compounded by the de facto exclusion of many ex-Ba’ath members and professionals that form the secular and nationalist core of the country, and the slow purging of other nationalists who do not take a sectarian and ethnic side from Ministries and professions.

While Coalition forces engaged in initiatives to stem violence, train Iraqi forces, and build public faith in political institutions, ethnic and sectarian tensions simultaneously pushed the country deeper into civil war. The February 22, 2006 bombing of the Golden Mosque was only the most visible symbol of a pattern of Sunni-Shi’ite clashes that began in 2003, steadily grew in 2004 and 2005. Different factions built up their militias, and infiltrated the new Iraqi security forces. Shi’ite militias became the primary challenge facing the Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, and the Shi’ite community itself fragmented into rivaling parties.

Sectarian fighting in Baghdad and surrounding urban areas between Shi’ite militias and loosely organized Sunni armed group – with ties to terrorist groups or ex-Ba’athists – comprised is only the most violent and visible symptom of civil conflict. Al-Qa’ida in Iraq operated out of Anbar province and sought to unite the various Sunni insurgent groups. Tensions between Kurds, Arabs, and Turcomans intensified the ethnic dimension of the war and violent inter-Shi’ite rivalries in the south threatened to divide the majority. Ultimately, these developments had the effect of blurring the distinction between the threat of an insurgency and that of a civil war.

In the process, sectarian and ethnic divisions have expanded from the actions of extremists and activists to become popular movements with a steadily broader base. While most Iraqis still expressed support for national unity in public opinion polls, the base for violence and cleansing has expanded to include more and more of the population and in areas where there is sectarian and ethnic tension and violence. This is particularly true where militias and local security forces provide the only real security, where young men had little employment, and where the struggle for control of villages, cities, and neighborhoods became a struggle for housing, businesses, and the ability to conduct a normal life.

I. Introduction: Developments through late-January 2007

Little progress has been made in political conciliation, the key step in reducing the level of violence in Iraq. As a result, the overall patterns in violence have broadened and grown more intense. The end result is a fragmented civil war driven more by sectarian and ethnic cleansing than killings and large-scale acts of violence.

II. Working Towards National Reconciliation

At the start of 2007, which US officials dubbed “the year of transition”, the Iraqi government faced serious challenges to its authority and ability to unite the country. Political infighting and boycotts hindered progress. Prime Minister Maliki announced the cabinet positions that he planned to reshuffle, which included the Sadr controlled Health Ministry.

Some parties representing the three main sects announced plans to form a coalition to enhance security and balance out the power of the Sadr bloc in the government. The coalition, however, fell apart when a Sunni group made unrealistic demands and Shi'ites lost the backing of Ayatollah Sistani. No progress was made to amend the Constitution, which contained ambiguities on over 50 key issues.

Reports continued of political affiliations with armed sectarian groups, frustrating the work of the Iraqi army and US forces in the capital. After eight tense months in office, al-Maliki announced that he would not seek a second term and that he would prefer to be done with the current one.

The leaders of Iraq's central government still publicly sought national unity and conciliation, and the Maliki government publicly supported President Bush in a new strategy designed to defeat both Sunni and Shi'ite extremists. Key Shi'ite leaders, however, seemed to prepare more and more for the prospect of seeking Shi'ite dominance in a struggle with Arab Sunnis. Kurdish leaders showed growing concern over Kurdish rights and autonomy, and Sunni leaders who participated in the political process showed more and more fear as they faced a breakdown of conciliation and compromise and future conflict with Shi'ites.

The Ministries of the government increasingly divided their personnel and spending efforts along sectarian and ethnic lines and often by party. Similar favoritism, purges, and control of spending affected government activity at the governorate and local level, compounded by massive corruption, nepotism, and personal favoritism.

The lack of unity and reconciliation in the government and Maliki's statement offered little hope of immediate political progress. The escalating security crisis was the primary concern for most Iraqis and they expected little from the government. MNF-Iraq spokesman Maj. Gen. William Caldwell said of the ‘year of transition’:⁵

We open 2007 facing significant challenges. Iraqi security forces must not only continue to improve their capabilities, but must also work to gain the confidence of all Iraqi people. The government of Iraq and the Council of Representatives will have to rise above past divisions and work to realize the people's desire for unity. This will likely entail difficult decisions on reforms to the de-Ba'athification process, and hard compromises necessary for national reconciliation.

The August - November Department of Defense Stability and Securing report, released in mid-December, stated that the reporting period “saw incremental progress in the Government of Iraq's willingness and ability to take over responsibility, build institutions, and to deliver essential services.” The report noted that the most important step for reconciliation was Prime Minister Maliki's National Reconciliation and Dialogue process, but “this project has shown little progress.”⁶ The National Reconciliation Conference did take place after the reporting period for the DoD's update, but key groups boycotted and little progress was made.

The quarterly report also pointed out the following challenges facing the Iraqi government:⁷

Critical domestic issues, including hydrocarbon legislation, de-Ba'athification reform, provincial elections, and demobilization of militias, must still be addressed. The failure of the government to implement concrete actions in these areas has contributed to a situation in which, as of October 2006, there were more Iraqis who expressed a lack of confidence in their government's ability to improve the situation than there were in July 2006. It remains an urgent responsibility of the Government of Iraq to resolve the outstanding issues that inhibit political progress and to demonstrate a resolve to contain and terminate sectarian violence.

The November assessment by the Pentagon was far more realistic than previous reports and accurately pointed out the many challenges facing Iraq, although most of the blame appeared to be placed on Iraqis, rather than poor US planning.

Growing Divides: Segregating the Country

The issue of autonomous regions remained a key issue dividing the country, but any official separation was postponed until 2008.

The Crisis Group summarized the problem of segregating the country into autonomous regions in a December 19, 2006 report:⁸

Despite significant population displacement, much of Iraq's population still lives in areas that are at least until recently were profoundly inter-mixed, due to labor migration, forced resettlement under past regimes and widespread inter-marriage across ethnic, confessional and tribal lines. These remain contact zones between various ethnic and confessional groups.

If there are ethnically or religiously "pure" areas at all, they are often minority islands in a sea of people of a different primary identity, such as the Sunni Arab groups in many cities that have majority populations (for example, Basra), the Shi'ite towns and villages north of Baghdad that are surrounded by Sunnis, and the Sunni Arab towns south of Baghdad on the road from the capital to the Shi'ites' holiest shrines in Karbala and Najaf. One deeply contested area is the wide mixed-population belt stretching from the Syrian border in north western Iraq to the Iranian border east of Baghdad, where various ethnic and religious communities vie for survival, political control and access to the rich oil deposits underneath.

In such a mosaic, no simple lines can be drawn to distinguish one community from another, or at least not without major violence between groups, within groups and even within families...

Political Answers to the Security Crisis?

The "unity" government seemed unable to build consensus as sectarian parties argued over every detail, making Prime Minister Maliki's job nearly impossible. Al-Maliki was caught between the need to placate Sunnis by showing that Shi'ite militias would be disarmed and losing Shi'ite popular support, particularly of al-Sadr's party, which held 30 seats in Parliament and controlled six ministries. Sunni and Shi'ite factions blamed one another of protecting their respective militias rather than the unity government.

A two-day National Reconciliation Conference began on December 16, 2006, but key groups were absent. Moqtada al-Sadr and his bloc refused an invitation and no one representing Sunni insurgents was present. Thus calls for peace and compromise did not resonate on the streets and none of the attending parties produced any new ideas for how to combat the violence. Maliki did invite members of the Old Iraqi Army to join the Iraqi security forces, but it seemed unlikely that the conference would have much effect.⁹

The August-November Department of Defense Report on Stability and Security in Iraq noted some progress in the Iraqi Parliament, but was also grimly realistic in its assessment:¹⁰

The Council of Representatives has made progress in several areas, including approving the Executive Procedures to Form Regions Law, passing the Investment Law, and forming a Constitutional Review Committee. There is a notable tendency for the Government of Iraq to delay making difficult decisions. Political parties boycott CoR sessions where agendas include topics that they do not want discussed or voted on. There are still many outstanding issues, including legislation on the enactment of a High Independent Electoral Commission Law; Provincial Election Commission Law; Hydrocarbon Law; de-Ba'athification Reform Law; Flag, Emblem and National Anthem Law; and Amnesty, Militias, and other Armed Formations Law.

The Department of Defense update characterized the political stalemate and proposed a timetable as follows:¹¹

Personal loyalties to various sub-national groups, such as tribe, sect, or political party, are often stronger than loyalty to Iraq as a nation-state. In addition, Iraq's political parties are often unwilling or unable to resolve conflicts through compromise. Further, some Iraqis have joined the political process but condone or maintain support for violent means as a source of political leverage. This makes effective national reconciliation and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs difficult to design and implement...

A negotiated, realistic timetable for transition to security self-reliance could allow the government of Iraq to take responsibility for its political development, economy, and security, without threatening or unnecessarily risking the gains made so far. Such a timetable could lead to changes in the political dynamic in Iraq, providing support for the government's own long-term vision: a united, federal, and democratic country, at peace with its neighbors and itself.

The report also commended the formation of a Constitutional Review Committee in September, although the group had yet to meet.

Efforts to develop coalitions had more mixed results. Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani did consider approving a US-backed coalition of two Kurdish groups, the Iraqi Islamic Party, and SCIRI to unite against violence and reduce the power of Sadr loyalists. Sistani had previously disapproved of any blocs that would divide the Shi'ite political parties. According to senior Shi'ite legislators, Ayatollah Sistani would accept the coalition only if it "preserved the unity" of the 130 member Shi'ite parliamentary bloc. Al-Sadr was unlikely to join a coalition that would limit his power, so the Shi'ite bloc would be preserved in name only.

Ayatollah Sistani's influence waned in 2006 as Sadr's Mahdi Army took control of the streets, but he was still a very powerful figure in Iraq and Shi'ite legislators would not proceed with the coalition without his approval. Yet Sistani displayed growing disillusionment with politics, telling visiting Shi'ite politicians that decisions were up to them. Those close to him said that the broad 130 member Shi'ite coalition had not united the way he wanted it to and that he was saddened by the deep divisions in the Shi'ite community and Iraq as a whole.¹²

Al-Maliki seemed tentative about joining such a coalition. A Shi'ite legislator close to Maliki said, "I think it's a leap into the unknown. The negative things are clear, but no one can explain exactly what the positive things are." Other politicians told the Prime Minister that if he joined, it would give him the political backing to break with Sadr. Al-Maliki, however, wanted to invite all parties into the bloc rather than limit membership.

The coalition clearly deepened splits in the internal Shi'ite community. The US embrace of al-Hakim and SCIRI in late 2006 in an attempt to marginalize al-Sadr could spell political suicide for al-Hakim, some Iraqis said. Many Shi'ites continued to oppose US "occupation" and if al-Hakim was seen to prop up the US image, he would lose crucial support. US support of the

coalition also deepened rifts with al-Sadr and the Mahdi Army, which had growing control of the political and economic space.

In the early years of the war, al-Hakim attacked US policy, but he appeared to change his tactics at the end of 2006, sensing an opportunity for political power. Al-Sadr loyalists, on the contrary, continued to boycott Parliament and did not attend the National Reconciliation Conference. Sadr officials also circulated a petition in Parliament for a timetable for US withdrawal and received 131 signatures – almost half of Parliament.

A political analyst in Baghdad said that Prime Minister Maliki was concerned about the new tri-sectarian coalition and US support of al-Hakim. However, many Iraqis believed that al-Hakim jeopardized his credibility and power by meeting with President Bush and opposing al-Sadr and Maliki. Sadr gained significant Shi'ite support by opposing US forces and providing protection for Shi'ites in Baghdad.¹³

The plan to form the coalition came to a virtual halt when members of the Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party set new conditions for their participation. Saleem Abdullah said that the Islamic Party required that more Sunnis be installed in senior ministerial and security force positions. It was very unlikely that Shi'ite SCIRI would agree to the new conditions.¹⁴

Further, Sistani decided then that he would not support the coalition, saying that the unity of Shi'ites could not be disrupted. Sistani sought to reunite the broken 130 member United Iraqi Alliance, which was deeply divided over key issues such as federalism. His rebuke all but ended the possibility of the coalition proceeding.¹⁵

Other political developments had a more immediate effect. In late December al-Maliki announced plans for a ministerial shakeup. The key Defense and Interior Ministry posts would go unchanged, but health, transportation, culture, woman's affairs, and tourism ministers would be replaced. Maliki's critics said that the shake-up was symbolic only because it did not change key security posts. Dawa Legislator Abbas Bayati responded, "The security dilemma is not an issue of ministries. The issue is beyond the government and ministries. The real challenge is to find reconciliation and political understanding. It's not possible to accuse the security ministries of poor performance."

Many Sunnis welcomed the change of the health minister, held by Sadr's bloc, which was widely accused of sectarianism, but Sadr had the responsibility of nominating a new minister. A member of the Dawa party admitted, "The service ministries are performing poorly, that's obvious to everyone. The Sadr bloc supervises many of the service ministries. The reshuffle is not targeted toward their bloc. It happens that the ministries they control are service ministries." The new ministers were expected to take charge in early 2007.¹⁶

The *New York Times* reported on Iraqi politicians' increasing control over security force activities. An Iraqi commander in Baghdad said that he frequently received phone calls from high ranking officials ordering him to release someone that Iraqi troops had captured engaging in some act of sectarian violence. In one instance, US and Iraqi troops found a bullet ridden car, sniper bullets, threatening notices to Shi'ites, and fake license plates. But when troops began to move in on the vehicle, the Iraqi commander received a call from the office of a top Sunni politician who owned the car and troops had to back off.

The US deputy commander for the Dagger Brigade Combat Team, First Infantry Division, said that he had "personally witnessed about a half-dozen of these incidents of what I would call

political pressure, where a minister or someone from a minister's office contacts one of these Iraqi commanders." And he added that the pressure placed on Iraqi police forces was even greater. US commanders commiserated with the Iraqi commanders and understood that they had little choice if they got a call from a politician. These incidents of "political pressure" strengthened the argument that the solution in Iraq had to be political as well as military, but it also offered little hope that political progress could take place when sectarianism was so entrenched in the daily political process.¹⁷

Strains between the US and Iraqi governments increased at the diplomatic level. President Bush was expected to move the US Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, into the top position at the United Nations in the near future. Some members of the Shi'ite political community welcomed the change, saying that Khalilzad had been too sympathetic to Sunnis in 2006. An independent Kurdish legislator said, "Lately there has been a lot of criticism by the Shiites against Khalilzad, saying he is pro-Sunni. A new face with this new strategy, possible that would be more effective."¹⁸

An exchange between the Iraqi government and the Sunni Association of Muslim Scholars on January 5 exemplified the tensions that hindered political progress and incited sectarian violence. The Association of Muslim Scholars issued a statement that said it had obtained information that militias were planning to attack neighborhoods in Baghdad and, "We also have come to know that some officials in this government know of this criminal scheme, which raises suspicions that they are collaborating with these militias." "The Association of Muslim Scholars holds the current Iraqi government and the occupation forces responsible for any injustice against Iraqi people."

Al-Maliki's office responded, "What has been written in the statement of the Association of Muslim Scholars is absolutely incorrect and it could provoke sedition. We hold the association responsible for anything that could happen as a result of this."¹⁹

On January 21 al-Sadr's 30 deputies and 6 cabinet ministers returned to the government and he stood down his militia. Sadr clearly had more to gain from rejoining the government and letting US led forces go after rogue members of the Mahdi Army that did not answer to him. His choice in the context of the Bush strategy in Baghdad had the potential to preserve his personal influence in Iraq as well as his loyalists in the militia.

Al-Maliki also announced that he would not tolerate the sectarian actions of the Mahdi Army and that he would not protect al-Sadr. The government held some 430 Mahdi Army members in mid-January.²⁰ The Prime Minister's choice coupled with Sadr's actions potentially revealed a shift in the Shi'ite strategy in Iraq at the start of the US surge. Al-Maliki's break with Sadr would ensure economic and military support from the US while the stand down of the Mahdi Army would focus US military efforts against Sunni insurgents.

The return of Sadr's bloc to Parliament brought attendance in assembly sessions to over 50% - the amount needed to pass laws - for the first time in several months, the *New York Times* reported. Since November 2006, the Iraqi Parliament - with 275 elected members - only had the numbers necessary to pass laws a handful of times; on one occasion as few as 65 members made it to the session.

Members of Parliament said that security was one of the prime reasons for absenteeism - which was widespread across every party and sectarian group. Salaries paid for 20 security guards, but

most lawmakers said that was not sufficient. But Iraqi officials said that some elected members were increasingly disillusioned with the Parliamentary process – which had not turned out like they thought it would. Many were also exhausted and frustrated and felt that regardless of how many sessions they attended, their voice did not resonate on Iraqi streets.

Those lawmakers who did not live outside the country – a group that included former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi – accomplished what that could in small, private meetings. Prime Minister Maliki repeatedly urged groups to attend Parliamentary sessions so that key laws could be passed, but the speaker – Mahmoud al-Mashhadani – wanted harsher repercussions for absenteeism.

For the first time in mid-January, al-Mashhadani read aloud the names of the absentees in an attempt to embarrass them. He also wanted to fine members \$400 for every missed session and replace those who failed to attend a minimum number of times. The return of Sadr's loyalists could keep the attendance level about 50% in the near future, allowing for votes to occur on key issues -- such as the oil law expected to reach full Parliament in February.²¹

Military Options and Political Failures

The political failure to achieve conciliation forced changes in US and Iraqi government strategy. In his speech on the new US strategy in Iraq on January 10, President Bush stated that Prime Minister Maliki gave US and Iraqi forces the “green light” to enter all neighborhoods in Baghdad to end sectarian violence.²² Although the President did not mention Sadr City directly, this statement seemed to contradict al-Maliki's strategy of pursuing a political solution with Moqtada al-Sadr; US forces would clearly still meet substantial resistance in Mahdi Army controlled neighborhoods in Baghdad.

President Bush set forth the several specific benchmarks for the Iraqi government, which he had discussed with Prime Minister Maliki, although al-Maliki's previous disavowal of US benchmarks drew into question to resolve of the Iraqi government to put them into action.²³

To establish its authority, the Iraqi government plans to take responsibility for security in all of Iraq's provinces by November [2007]. The give every Iraqi citizen in the country's economy, Iraq will pass legislation to share oil revenues among all Iraqis. To show that it is committed to delivering a better life, the Iraqi government will spend \$10 billion of its own money on reconstruction and infrastructure projects that will create new jobs. To empower local leaders, Iraqis plan to hold provincial elections later this year. And to allow more Iraqis to re-enter their nation's political life, the government will reform de-Ba'athification laws, and establish a fair process for considering amendments to Iraq's constitution.

In a press conference the following day, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stressed the dangers in Iraq's growing sectarian divisions:

I think as to -- I'd make one point about Baghdad and one point about the rest of the country. What has really happened in Baghdad -- and Prime Minister Maliki said this to the president -- is that the Iraqi people have lost confidence in the ability of their government to defend them in their capital, to protect them in their capital. And in fact, there are some, because of the sectarian overtones, who wonder if in fact their government is willing to protect them if they come from one sect or another. And I think what the Iraqi government is trying to do, and needs to do, is to reestablish civil order in the sense that they are, in fact, willing to and capable of protecting all Iraqis who live in Baghdad. That means the kinds of activities that take place in these neighborhoods wouldn't be tolerated, and they would, in fact, go after some of the violent people on either side who are causing the problems. And I think that will be a measure of how well they are doing.

In the provinces -- it's also important to recognize that not everything -- as important as Baghdad is, not everything rests on Baghdad. One reason that we're diversifying and decentralizing into the provinces and the localities is that you want to strengthen the governance from the bottom up as well. And we've learned that it is somewhat more effective to be able to deliver governance and economic development and reconstruction at a more local level. And I think it's starting to have an effect. We've seen it work in Mosul, we've seen it work in Tall Afar. And as the secretary said -- Bob said, in Anbar, we're beginning to get some signs that the tribal sheikhs there want to fight the violent extremists. And we've been in Anbar for a while now working politically.

Director of National Intelligence, John D. Negroponte, briefed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on January 11, 2007.. Negroponte said that security in Iraq depended on the evolution of the following key issues:

- Foremost is the ability of the Iraqi government to establish and nurture effective national institutions that are based on national rather than religious or ethnic interests; and within this context, the willingness of the security forces to pursue extremist elements of all kind.
- The extent to which the Shia feel sufficiently secure in their political position: despite their recent electoral victories and overall political ascendancy, the Shia at present remain deeply insecure about their hold on power. This insecurity is manifested in the Shia's refusal to make real concessions to the Sunnis on a range of issues, such as easing of de-Ba'athification and clamping down on radical Shia militias.
- The extent to which Arab Sunnis develop trust and participate in the new political order: now, many remain unwilling to accept their minority status, continue to resist violently this new political order, and distrust the Shia-led government and its commitment to their security.
- The extent to which divisions within the Shia and the Sunni are addressed: profound intragroup divisions among the Shia and Sunnis complicate the situation, because no single leader can speak for or exert control over these groups.
- The extent to which extremists, most notably al-Qa.ida in Iraq (AQI), are suppressed: these groups continue to conduct high-profile, often mass casualty attacks that are effective accelerants for the self-sustaining inter-sectarian struggle between Shia and Sunnis.
- And lastly, the extent to which Iraq's neighbors can be persuaded to stop the flow of militants and munitions across their borders: Iran's lethal support for select groups of Iraqi Shia militants clearly exacerbates the conflict in Iraq, as does Syria's continued provision of safehaven for expatriate Iraqi Ba'thists and less-than-adequate measures to stop the flow of foreign jihadists into Iraq.

Secretary of Defense Gates emphasized the linkage between US efforts and further Iraqi government actions:

I think that if we get some indication that the Iraqis are not fulfilling their commitments, the way this is going to unfold -- we are going to have a number of opportunities to go back to the Iraqis and point out where they have failed to meet their commitments and to move forward.

I think that, frankly, based on the president's conversations and the conversations that our ambassador and General Casey have had not just with the prime minister but with President Talabani and with other leaders in the Iraqi government that there is a broad commitment in the Iraqi government across several different groups in the government to make this work. So I think our assumption going forward is that they every intention of making this work, of fulfilling their commitments.

And, frankly, you know, the notion that the Iraqis are standing by while we're doing the fighting is really not an accurate statement. In fact, one of our military folks told me the other day that now more than half of the casualties coming into U.S. military hospitals in Iraq are Iraqi military. So they are fighting, and as we saw in the streets of Baghdad just in the last couple of days, they are fighting. So I think that -- our belief is they will fulfill these commitments. But if we see them falling short, we will make sure that they know that and how strongly we feel about it.

These changes in strategy had the potential to move political progress in a positive direction. Yet much depended on the Iraqi government's ability to reach compromises among themselves, and subsequently, throughout the population. As sectarian tensions increased, more and more Iraqis looked to local leaders to control political space and it remained unclear if political leaders had enough power to end extreme sectarianism.

Doubts Arise about Prime Minister Maliki and the Government

Despite public commitments to unity, Shi'ite leaders in government appeared increasingly to work to marginalize Sunnis and made few, if any, efforts to address Sunni concerns. Kurdish politicians distanced themselves from the Arab sectarian conflict, while working for the benefit of Kurdistan and supporting the peshmerga. Sunnis who still supported the political process – a number that was rapidly falling – became further marginalized and doubted the likelihood of their voice ever being heard in the Shi'ite controlled government. Further, Ministries were broken down by sectarian control, and it remained to be seen if the cabinet shakeup would have any effect.

Senior US administration officials told several news sources that they were increasingly concerned about al-Maliki's intentions and his ability to lead Iraq forward. Their fears were exacerbated by the conduct of the Iraqi government surrounding Saddam Hussein's sentencing and execution. One official said, "If that's an indication of how Maliki is operating these days, we've got a deeper problem with the bigger effort."²⁴

The *Washington Post* summarized US concerns about these trends and Maliki's government as follows:²⁵

US intelligence thinks Maliki is under enormous pressure and is therefore unpredictable. American military commanders think they can deal with him, but only with a lot of work and patience. State Department officials are uncertain about his prospects but contend that it is time for Maliki to take control – and for the US to keep the Baghdad government at arms length... The shared fear, however, is that any new US strategy might shift greater control to Maliki and that then he might be unable or unwilling to take the tough steps needed. The US would be back to square one.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on January 11, 2007 – the day after President Bush announced the new US strategy – "We believe the Iraqi Government, which has not always performed, has every reason to understand the consequences now of nonperformance. They, after all, came to us and said that this problem had to be solved." When questioned by Senator Biden about Prime Minister Maliki's resolve, Secretary Rice said, "I think he knows that his government is, in a sense, on borrowed time, not just in terms of the American people but in terms of the Iraqi people," but she thought he would work towards holding up his side of the bargain.²⁶

Prime Minister Maliki expressed doubts of his own. He told the *Wall Street Journal*, "I didn't want to take this position. I only agreed because I thought it would serve the national interest, and I will not accept it again." He added, "I wish I could be done with it even before the end of this term. I would like to serve my people from outside the circle of senior officials, maybe through the parliament, or through working directly with the people." Maliki's statement showed the effects of a trying first eight months in office and did not help create confidence in his government.²⁷

Saddam Hussein's Sentencing

The trials of Saddam Hussein and his top followers became another source of sectarian political tensions. On November 5, 2006 an Iraqi court sentenced Saddam Hussein to death by execution for the killing of 148 Shi'ites in 1982 after an assassination attempt. On December 30, 2006 Saddam Hussein was executed by hanging for crimes against humanity. The penalty came five days after an Iraqi appeals court upheld the November 5 decision. It was a unilateral Iraqi decision that received condemnation worldwide and within Iraq, in part because of the nature of the execution.

A *New York Times* report stated that Maliki had continually urged US military officials to hand over control of Hussein as quickly as possible. Ambassador Khalilzad said that there was no possible way of delaying the transfer to the Iraqis. Interviews with American officials following the hanging found that the US had made significant efforts to delay the execution, but the final result was a "clash of cultures and political interests."²⁸

A letter posted on the internet in the name of Hussein days before his execution called on Iraqis not to hate the people of the foreign countries that invaded Iraq, just their leaders. The letter also made an apparent reference to the help that's some US attorneys gave him during the trial.²⁹

Hussein was put to death on the start of the Eid al-Adha holiday for Sunnis in spite of requests by American officials that the former leader not be executed on the holiday and that his two deputies be given 30 days to sign off on the sentence.³⁰ Under the Iraqi Constitution, President Talabani – who opposed the death penalty – and the two deputies had to sign off on the execution, but a court rule prevented any change once a sentence was ratified by the appeals panel.³¹ Cell phone recordings later became public that showed security personnel taunting Hussein at the hanging shouting "Moqtada, Moqtada".

Sunnis then demonstrated in protest against the execution and most agreed that it was a political mistake by the Shi'ite led government. Sunni demonstrators broke the locks on the golden shrine in Samarra that had been attacked last February and carried a mock casket. Neighborhoods in Baghdad also praised the Ba'ath Party and continued to pledge their support for Ba'athist fighters. Sunni al-Qa'ida in Iraq linked insurgents, however, did not react. Websites used by the militants did not issue any statements and there were no immediate retaliatory attacks.

The Iraqi government did launch an investigation into the jeering and misbehavior seen by Shi'ite security guards at Hussein's hanging and arrested two guards suspected of circulating the cell phone video. But one Sunni educator said they had already "changed him from a criminal into a martyr." The incident confirmed for Sunnis that there was little promise of reconciliation within the Shi'ite led government.³²

The US distanced itself from the execution and reiterated that it was unilateral Iraqi decision and that the US military played no part, except to airlift Hussein's body for burial in his hometown of Tikrit. MNF-Iraq spokesman Maj. Gen. Caldwell did concede, "If you're asking me, would we have done things different, yes, we would have. But that's not our decision. That's a government of Iraq decision."³³

On January 15 Iraq also executed Barzan Ibrahim al-Tikriti, former head of Hussein's secret police, and Awad Hamad al-Bandar, former chief judge of the revolutionary court. Under US pressure, the Maliki government took action to prevent the misdemeanors that occurred at

Hussein's execution. However, Ibrahim was decapitated during his hanging, leading to further cries of sectarianism of the Iraqi government.³⁴

III. The Rising Level of Conflict

Sectarian and ethnic divisions expanded to become popular movements with a steadily broader base. While most Iraqis still expressed support for national unity in public opinion polls, the base for violence and cleansing expanded to include more and more of the population in areas where there was sectarian and ethnic tension and violence. This increase in tension was particularly common where militias and local security forces provided the only real security, young men had little employment, and the struggle for control of villages, cities, and neighborhoods became a struggle for housing, businesses, and the ability to conduct a normal life. The United Nations estimated that Iraqi civilian deaths averaged 94 a day in 2006. The Iraqi conflict might not have divided into easily definable sides or patterns of violence but it was clearly a civil war.

The Pentagon's August-November Stability and Security in Iraq report summarized the security environment as follows:³⁵

- Baghdad remained the focus of much of Iraq's violence, but it was also significant in Diyala and Anbar provinces and in the cities of Kirkuk, Mosul, Basra, Amara, and Balad."
- The Violence in Anbar was almost completely initiated by Sunni extremists and directed at Coalition forces. However, there were attempts by al-Qaeda in Iraq and affiliated Sunni extremists to intimidate the local population. These efforts provoked a backlash. Some tribal chiefs and Sunni Rejectionist leaders began localized efforts to retake control of their areas.
- In Diyala, and recently in Balad, in conflict between al-Qaeda in Iraq and Jaysh al-Mahdi was a sectarian fight for power and influence. In Diyala, sectarian violence decreased in September, largely due to a successful series of Iraq Army/Coalition forces operations, which significantly degraded al-Qaeda in Iraq activity. However, in October, the number of casualties rose, as al-Qaeda in Iraq resumed sectarian attacks.
- The conflict in Basra, Amara, and the south was characterized by tribal rivalry, increasing intra-shi'a competition, and attacks on Coalition forces operating in the region.

A Crisis Group report in late December also described the conflict as follows:³⁶

Notwithstanding repeated US proclamations of yet another turning point or milestone, the unremitting and sustained level of violence has amply demonstrated that it has become self-sustained, immune to episodic military achievements by American forces or to apparent political advances by the Iraqis themselves. Clearly, the violence was triggered, and is now both fuelled and contained by the US military presence. But by now the conflict has developed its own, intrinsic dynamic, together with the means to reproduce and perpetuate itself.

The self-reinforcing cycle of violence has several explanations. The armed groups' and militias' most important source of legitimacy and power has become the conflict's very radicalization: the more they can point to the extreme violence of the other, the more they can justify their own in terms of protection (of one's community) and revenge (against another). In the absence of a state apparatus capable of safeguarding the population, civilians are caught in a vicious cycle in which they must rely on armed groups. The more the situation deteriorates, the easier it is for these groups to command loyalty and mobilize their political and social constituency: fear of the "other" has, in essence, become their most valuable asset. The stronger the Sunni radicals become, the stronger become the Shiite radicals. And vice versa.

Since 2006 in particular, the armed opposition has focused its propaganda on crimes committed against Sunni Arabs, thereby encouraging a siege mentality and promoting its own role as protector of the oppressed population. Shiite militias similarly legitimate their actions by highlighting both the state's deficiency and their resulting responsibility to protect civilians. In short, violence spawns the symbolic resources that its perpetrators need.

This dynamic is clearly manifested in the groups' behavior. At one level, all sides claim to be targeting narrowly defined, fanatical and brutal enemies who can only be dealt with violently. For the most part, none of the Sunni insurgent groups – not even the jihadis – publicly claims responsibility for attacks against Shiite civilians.

Broad struggles existed in most of the country with mixed populations for control or dominance by Shi'ite, Sunni, and Kurdish factions, often driving out smaller minorities or suppressing them. These struggles were difficult to map or quantify, but affected virtually every governorate. Kurd-Arab struggles were particularly important in the north near Kirkuk, the northern oil fields, to the east of Mosul, and in areas with a Turcoman population. Sectarian cleansing continued to be a major problem in the Basra areas and in many towns and villages, and rural areas throughout the country with mixed Sunni and Shi'ite populations.

Baghdad remained the most visible center of the violence. Sectarian militias fought to gain strongholds in the neighborhoods surrounding the green zone, which could virtually be mapped out according to the militia or neighborhood gang residents supported. The Mahdi Army had almost complete control of the eastern portion of the city, but through soft ethnic cleansing by militias, Shi'ite extremists gained a foothold in the western neighborhoods. Sunnis relied increasingly on insurgent groups and neighborhood gangs for protection and to seek revenge.

The Defense Department's November assessment said of the capital, "The level of sectarian violence has risen, with much of it directed against civilians. Neighborhoods have responded by forming their own militias for self defense."³⁷

The November – December Human Rights Report by the United Nations also said:³⁸

Baghdad is at the center of the sectarian violence. Sunni and Shiite armed groups are attempting to establish territorial control of Baghdad's many predominantly mixed neighborhoods by intimidating and killing civilian populations and forcing them into displacements to parts of the city inhabited or controlled by members of their ethnic group. Reports suggest the existence of large movements of populations primarily within the city boundaries, as the neighborhoods become increasingly divided among Sunni and Shi'a armed groups, and are consequently grouped together based on their sect and ethnicity. This forced displacement has been achieved by means of large scale attacks targeting civilians, kidnappings, extra-judicial killings, dropping of leaflets, destruction of property, and intimidation. For instance, fighting between Sunni and Shiite armed groups were primarily recorded in December in Baghdad's neighborhoods of Dora, Hurriyah, Al Adhamiya, Khadimiya, Ghazaliyah, Amariya and Qadisiyah.

Although large scale attacks and extra judicial killings caused grave loss of life, the Report noted that intimidation campaigns, kidnappings, and destruction of property equally contributed to the polarization of sects into controlled areas. The key issue at stake was not only territorial control, but also control of political and economic space. In order for the armed sectarian groups to sustain their movements, they needed to gain the support of the population.

Two large scale attacks took place in the capital during the reporting period: on January 16 a car bomb exploded near al-Mustansiriyah University in eastern Baghdad, killing 60 people and wounding 140, the majority of whom were students; and on January 22 multiple bombs in a central market killed 88 and wounded at least 160.

The level of violence in Kirkuk also escalated:

On January 17 in Kirkuk a suicide truck bomber blew himself up near a police headquarters in Kirkuk, northern Iraq, killing 10 people and wounding 42 others. On January 16, a police colonel survived a roadside bomb that exploded near his car, killing one civilian and wounding four, including two policemen. On January 15 two people were killed and five wounded when a car bomb exploded near the Turkman

Front Party and a Katyusha rocket landed in a house wounding two people. On January 13, 2007 gunmen planted explosives at a Shi'ite mosque under construction. The mosque was 65% completed, but the explosion destroyed it. On the same day, gunmen killed two contractors working on a main highway. Mortar rounds also hit a neighborhood, wounding three people. On January 5 a roadside bomb targeting a police patrol wounded two policemen, including a major who was in serious condition. These attacks anticipated the sectarian violence that would occur if a referendum took place in November of 2007. It was clear that northern Iraq was not immune from the sectarian violence centered in Baghdad.

The November – December UN Human Rights report said of Kirkuk:³⁹

Human rights violations are reportedly committed by security forces at detention centers. In many cases the arrest and detention of people is carried out by Kurdish militias. Detainees are often transferred directly to the Kurdistan Region without notifying the governorate or the police. Officials in Kirkuk are aware of such practices, yet no significant effort has been made to stop them. Even though violent is not on the same level as in Baghdad, on-going human rights violations and the surge of violent acts which have significantly increased since 2003 are widely believed to be the doing of perpetrators and instigators from inside and outside Iraq and Kirkuk. Lately, due to the continuing insecurity, ethnic groups have moved closer to their own communities for protection.

The lack of adequate protection by government security forces in Kirkuk forced residents to turn to the armed groups from their respective sects for security.

The number of attacks in Iraq became increasingly less important as the insurgency transformed into a civil conflict. What was important was the growing control of local populations by sectarian armed groups. Nationalists were either eliminated or coerced into taking a side in the sectarian struggle. Ethnic groups built up local security structures – often in the absence of adequate government security forces – to gain the trust and political backing of members of their respective sects.

Meanwhile, these armed groups used threats, physical intimidation, blackmail, seizure of property, raids on homes and businesses, use of checkpoints to push other factions out, kidnappings and extortion, misuse of government offices and police, and disappearances to wage a campaign of soft ethnic cleansing against others. Maps of Baghdad and other major cities with mixed populations showed a steady separation of the population on sectarian and ethnic lines, and reflected the efforts of the dominant side to push the other out or exclude it.

This soft sectarian cleansing had all but eliminated nationalist voices at the beginning of 2007, although publicly the Iraqi government and security forces voiced their commitment to unity. The reality was that increasingly the Iraqi population – the people who would control the outcome of the conflict – tied themselves to a variety of locally armed groups who all fought for control of political and economic space.

Corruption and the local and national levels and widespread unemployment in ethnically mixed violent cities led many young men to join sectarian groups simply with the hope of bringing life back to normal.

Defining the Conflict

The conflict in Iraq became steadily more complex and harder to define. The slow and steady push toward widespread civil conflict in 2004 and 2006 quickened in 2006 as it became more visible and public. The level of control of the population by a large number of diverse sectarian groups was difficult to gauge using readily available sources, but it was clearly growing. The conflict was a civil war by every definition, but the issue at the start of 2007 was whether any

security or political offensive by the US or Iraq could reduce the control that sectarian groups possessed over the Iraqi population.

The Pentagon's August-November Stability and Security in Iraq Report defined the conflict in the following way:⁴⁰

The conflict in Iraq has been characterized by a struggle between Sunni and Shi'a armed groups fighting for religious, political, and economic influence, set against a backdrop of a Sunni insurgency and terrorist campaigns directed against the majority Shi'a Government of Iraq and the Coalition forces that are supporting it. The competition among factions has manifested itself in ethno-sectarian violence, conflicting national and provincial politics, suspension about the work of government ministries, pressures in ISF operations, and criminal activities. In contested areas, such as Baghdad, Diyala, and Kirkuk, extremists on all sides have sought to undermine the religious and ethnic tolerance of the Iraqi people in order to gain control of territory and resources.

The report fell short of openly describing the conflict as civil war, but it was a far more realistic assessment by the DoD than in past reports:⁴¹

At the present time, sustained ethno-sectarian violence is the greatest threat to security and stability in Iraq. Competition between sects and ethnic political groups for economic and political power has become a dominant feature in the political landscape. Such violence is tragic and tends to undermine the rule of law and discredit the elected government. However, the situation in Iraq is far more complex than the term "civil war" implies; attempts to define the several and diverse sources of violence as civil war are not helpful to Iraqi efforts to arrive at political accommodations.

However, conditions that could lead to civil war do exist, especially in and around Baghdad, and concern regarding civil war runs high among the Iraqi populace. Within the four provinces where the overwhelming majority of attacks occur (Anbar, Baghdad, Salah ad Din, and Diyala), violence remains localized to mixed neighborhoods. The Iraqi institutions of the center are holding, and members of the current government have not openly abandoned the political process. Decisive leadership by the Government of Iraq, supported by the United States and its Coalition partners, could mitigate further movement toward civil war and curb sectarian violence. Iraqi leaders must take advantage of the popular support for a unified Iraq and the opposition to violence to form institutions that take responsibility for Iraq's security.

A poll included in the DoD report found that Iraqis in most provinces were more concerned about the outbreak of full scale civil war in October 2006 than they were at the same time in 2005. Figure 1 shows that Iraqis in Ninawa, Tamim, Salahaddin, Diyala, and Baghdad Provinces were the most concerned about civil war. The largest increases in percent answering "very" or "somewhat" concerned over civil war were in the northern Dahuk and Sulaymaniyah Provinces.

Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan joined the international community in saying that Iraq was in civil war; "Muslims kill each other just because they belong to different sects. This is a civil war because I cannot make another definition."⁴²

It was equally clear in the winter of 2006-2007 that the sectarian violence was spreading from Baghdad into surrounding provinces. The expansive urban area around the capital was just as ethnically diverse and residents in Baquba, Samarra, and elsewhere became wrapped up in the cycle of revenge killings. Young men in ethnically diverse areas found themselves surrounded by violence, with little opportunity to find jobs or support themselves, leading many to join a variety of armed groups for survival and protection.

Figure 1: Concern over Civil war: Breakdown of Provinces, November 2005 and October 2006

Percent Answering “very” or “somewhat” concerned that Iraq was entering a state of civil war

| Iraqi Province | November 2005 | October 2006 |
|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Ninawa | 75%-100% | 75%-100% |
| Dahuk | 0%-25% | 50%-75% |
| Arbil | 0%-25% | 50%-75% |
| Tamim | 50%-75% | 75%-100% |
| Sulaymaniyah | 0%-25% | 50%-75% |
| Salah ad Din | 50%-75% | 75%-100% |
| Diyala | 50%-75% | 75%-100% |
| Baghdad | 50%-75% | 75%-100% |
| Karbala | 25%-50% | 25%-50% |
| Babil | 25%-50% | 25%-50% |
| Wasit | 25%-50% | 25%-50% |
| Najaf | 25%-50% | 25%-50% |
| Muthanna | 0%-25% | 25%-50% |
| Qadisiyah | 25%-50% | 25%-50% |
| Dhi Qar | 0%-25% | 25%-50% |
| Maysan | 0%-25% | 25%-50% |
| Basra | 0%-25% | 25%-75% |

Source: “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq,” Department of Defense, Quarterly Report to Congress, November 2006, p. 24.

Sectarian Displacement

Another key aspect of the civil war in Iraq was the rising number of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Soft ethnic cleansing was an increasingly common tactic used by ethnic groups to intimidate members of opposing sects as well as nationalists who refused to take a side in the civil conflict. Locally armed groups could win the support of communities by forcing individuals from minority sects to leave their homes through threats or killing of family members, leaving only members of one ethnic group.

The numbers of internally displaced persons reported by international or Iraqi organizations varied somewhat and it was unclear what methods the agencies used to determine their respective numbers. Yet, all the reports showed a dramatic increase in the number of displaced persons since the mosque bombing in February. Displaced Iraqis fleeing sectarian violence were forced to live in poor, often overcrowded conditions with little hope of finding meaningful employment.

Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis were forced to leave towns in which they were a sectarian minority. Many found refuge with family or friends, but others were forced to live in temporary housing set up by aid organizations. A large number of Iraqis also fled the country, many of whom saw little hope of returning.

A Crisis Group report said of sectarian displacement in Baghdad:⁴³

As described by its inhabitants, the capital is now clearly split between the western bank of the Tigris (al-Kharkh), predominantly Sunni, and its eastern bank (al-Rusafa), primarily Shi'ite. Nevertheless, large minority enclaves remain on both sides. The urban belt surrounding Baghdad is experiencing the same process of sectarian cleansing, with locales now defined as either Sunni or Shi'ite, clear demarcation zones, and, as a result, significantly heightened tensions.

The report described the neighborhoods of Adhamiya and Kadhamiya as the most sensitive cases because they both lay in the "opposite" sectarian area. Other disputed towns included the Shi'ite city of Samarra – located a mainly Sunni area – and the Sunni cities of Yusifiya, Mahmudiya, and Iskandariya, which lay in the Shi'ite south.

As Figure 2 shows, ethnic and sectarian displacement created major refugee populations. A late December article in the *International Herald Tribune* stated that 1.8 million Iraqi were living outside the country and 1.6 million had been internally displaced since 2003. Since February 2006, 50,000 moved within the country, and it appeared that the crisis was more pronounced among Shi'ites. The housing minister, Istabraq al-Shouk, estimated the housing shortage at about 2 million homes across Iraq.⁴⁴

At the end of 2006, the UN estimated that there were 1.7 million internally displaced Iraqis, with average displacement at 40,000 to 50,000 a month. A table by UNHCR, shown below, indicated that the number of IDPs in Iraq and Iraqis living outside the country was expected to increase in 2007.⁴⁵ A total of 470,094 Iraqis were displaced since the Samarra mosque bombing on February 22, 2006. The number of IDPs from Anbar Province was the highest in 2006 with 10,105 families displaced; Karbala had 7,570 families displaced; and Baghdad and Dohuk each had 7,000.⁴⁶

In comparison, in testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee on January 16 Assistant Secretary of State Ellen Sauerbrey said that there were 500,000 internally displaced persons in Iraq.

The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq November – December Human Rights report said regarding the influx of IDPs into Kurdistan:⁴⁷

Although the KRG authorities have received IDPs of all ethnicities in all three Governorates, recent entry regulations have restricted the movement of IDPs to reside and seek employment in the region. The lack of a unified approach in all three Governorates has led to inconsistent policies and practices regarding IDPs. The assistance provided by KRG authorities favors Kurdish IDPs, while Arab IDPs have been given the least support because of security fears...

HRO had offered its support to the authorities in KRG in the formulation of regulations regarding IDPs consistent with human rights standards. However, government officials in Erbil have recently provided conflicting statements to the media and to HRO on the conditions for entry of IDPs, particularly with regard to the issuance of residence permits. There are approximately 119,270 IDP families in the Kurdistan Region, from before 2003 and as a result of the most recent violence in the south and center of the country. A small number of these, some 1,963 families are of Arab background, and, according to information received by HRO, are liable to receive discriminatory and unfair treatment.

The UN said that roughly 100,000 Iraqis fled to other countries in 2006. Jordan and Syria took on the majority of refugees, but both countries began to place restrictions on the number of Iraqis allowed across the border, and far fewer were granted refugee status. The US granted only 466 Iraqis refugee status since 2003, and only 3.5% of the total refugees allowed in the country in 2006, in part because of stringent security procedures.⁴⁸

In Baghdad, where the problem was the most acute, about 1,000 families moved into the former Iraqi Air Defense headquarters and air force club. They lacked basic necessities and it was overcrowded, but they had nowhere else to go. Another family lived in an old hospital that had become a dumping ground. In Kirkuk, 20% of those displaced – mostly Kurds seeking to regain lost property – lived in old government buildings and temporary encampments. In Najaf, Shi'ites fleeing Sunni areas relied on religious charities and occupied ex-Ba'ath buildings.

Many internally displaced persons were fleeing violence or had been threatened in their previous location, but others simply could not afford the rent prices that had jumped after the fall of Hussein. One man working as a security official – one of the few jobs readily available – made about half the amount per month that he would need to rent a home for his family.

There were few government efforts to address the rising housing crisis. The Housing Ministry was building 17 complexes with 500 apartments each across the country for families of those killed by militants, but that would create only 8,500 homes and it was unclear how the government would determine who exactly was eligible.⁴⁹

The soft sectarian cleansing in the capital was not limited to homes; mosques in once-mixed neighborhoods were labeled as Shi'ite or Sunni which had once been shared. A mosque in Hurriya – where Shi'ite militias forced the last Sunni families out in late 2006 – had a paper sign on the door identifying it as a Shi'ite only mosque; a Sunni mosque down the street was boarded up.

Forced relocations were particularly hard on the rising number of widows in Baghdad. They were often told that they would need to move their families by compassionate neighbors of the other sect. Widows never received money for the homes they had to vacate. Most had little success finding jobs in new neighborhoods and only a small percentage received compensation from the government, making the economic toll devastating.⁵⁰

A map by the *Los Angeles Times* showed the Baghdad neighborhoods that had “undergone dramatic demographic change since the 2003 invasion.” The northeastern Shaab, southern Risalah, northwestern Hurriya, and southeastern Zafaraniya neighborhoods had changed from “mixed Shi’ite to majority Shi’ite”; the central Adil, Yarmouk, and Amariya neighborhoods changed from “mixed Sunni to majority Sunni”; the southern Jihad neighborhood changed from “mixed Sunni to majority Shi’ite”; and the southern Dora neighborhood changed from “mixed Christian to majority Sunni”.⁵¹

The accompanying article stated that Shi’ite militias were overpowering Sunni groups in efforts to create sectarian enclaves. In the past, in general terms, to the east of the Tigris River was predominantly Shi’ite and to the west was majority Sunni, but efforts by Shi’ite militias – particularly the Mahdi Army – succeeded in creating Shi’ite majority zones to the west of the Tigris, such as Hurriya and Jihad. The resulting sensation was that Sunnis were being pushed further and further west, with many opting to flee to Anbar Province.

Sunni residents forced to flee Hurriya in December 2006 said that in many cases Iraqi security forces took down checkpoints to allow Shi’ite militias to enter and threaten Sunni families. If the intimidation campaign failed to make Sunnis leave, policemen would arrest those who fired at the militants.⁵²

The main destination of internally displaced Sunnis was Falluja. The population reached pre-2004 levels of 300,000 by the end of 2006 and the State Department estimated that well over 40,000 Sunnis fled to Anbar Province in 2006. The majority came from Baghdad, but others traveled from the Shi’ite south to the Sunni safehaven. US troops stationed in Falluja, many of whom served during the battle for the city in 2004, saw the irony of their new role as “protectors of the Sunnis.”

In a busy week in Falluja, about 1,500 men got coveted IDs cards from the marine outpost. The outpost was manned 24 hours a day by marines and includes several waiting areas for the hundreds of Sunnis who arrived daily to get the cards that would help them find housing and work in the city. The marines used infrared retina scanners, fingerprinting, and interviews to ensure that the individuals had not committed a serious criminal act and were not likely to join with al-Qa’ida forces that still attacked the city regularly.

Talking with the internally displaced persons, most marines heard stories of death and intimidation in Baghdad and sorrow of having to relocate. The marines looked past some misdemeanors – such as taking money to fire a weapon at US troops two years ago – and they knew most refugees were just looking for security for their families. Falluja continued to suffer from insurgent attacks, reconstruction projects proceeded slowly, and the police force had yet to take control of any of the city’s checkpoints, but the US controlled city was the safest place for Sunni IDPs fleeing the sectarian violence of mixed provinces.⁵³

The number of internally displaced persons in Iraq left little doubt that a process of soft sectarian cleansing – by both Sunni and Shi’ite groups – was under way. A former Middle East intelligence official, Wayne White, said of the crisis, “We may be about one-third of the way through the process, with little ability to do anything about it.”⁵⁴

Figure 2: The Refugee/Internally Displaced Person Crisis in Iraq, 2007

| Type of Population | Origin/Location | Jan 2007 | | Dec 2007 (projections/targets) | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| | | Total | To be Assisted and/or Registered by UNHCR | Total | To be Assisted and/or Registered by UNHCR |
| Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Iraq | Palestinians | 15,000 | 5,000 | 7,500 | 7,500 |
| | Turkish | 16,110 | 16,110 | 8,950 | 8,950 |
| | Iranian | 11,960 | 11,960 | 11,150 | 11,150 |
| | Syrian | 870 | 870 | - | - |
| | Sudanese | 142 | 142 | 0 | 0 |
| IDPs | Iraq | 1,700,000 | 100,000 | 2,300,000-2,700,000 | 150,000-600,000 |
| Iraqis in neighboring countries | Syria | 500,000-700,000 | 40,000 | 500,000-1,000,000 | 100,000 |
| | Jordan | 500,000-700,000 | 21,000 | 500,000-700,000 | 70,000 |
| | Egypt | - | 2,500 | - | 20,000 |
| | Lebanon | 20,000-40,000 | 3,500 | 30,000-50,000 | 7,000-10,000 |
| | Turkey | - | 5,100 | - | 5,100 |
| Returnees | Iraq | 300,000 | | 50,000 | |

Source: "Supplementary Appeal Iraq Situation Response," UNHCR, January 2007.

IV. Security Initiatives and their Impact on the Insurgency

Baghdad remained the most visible center of the civil war, but sectarian violence was spreading throughout the country. New security initiatives for Baghdad and Diyala provinces were announced. In Diyala, both Sunni insurgents and Shi'ite militias operated without restraint, leading the US to launch a counterinsurgency campaign with the support of Iraqi Army troops. In Anbar Province the Sunni insurgency battled US troops in the cities of Falluja, Ramadi, and Hit. Throughout the country, the US military was forced to shift attention from building up Iraqi security forces to stopping the cycle of sectarian violence.

Lt. Gen. David Petraeus, nominated as Commanding General MNF-Iraq, in answers to advance policy questions from the Senate Armed Services Committee, said of the major challenges in Iraq:⁵⁵

The top challenge is providing the security necessary to reduce the cycle of violence in Iraq today. This will be a difficult mission and time is not on our side. We must focus on population security, particularly in Baghdad, to give the Iraqi government the breathing space it needs to become more effective. The second challenge is to continue the development of capable Iraqi Security Forces, relatively free of ethnic and sectarian bias. The Iraqi Army has made much progress, but is uneven and the police remain a challenge. The third challenge is the integration of the interagency effort to ensure that progress is made along all lines of operation – not just security, but economic, governance, and the rule of law as well. That is related to the fourth challenge, and this is the lack of capacity of the Iraqi government. Iraq has enormous natural resources and potential wealth. However, to take advantage of its blessing, not only must security be improved, but critical national issues must be resolved by the Iraqis, on issues such as national reconciliation, the devolution of power below Baghdad, the distribution of oil wealth, and so on. Only through unity of effort of all – coalition and Iraq, military and civilian – can we bring the full weight of our effort to bear on the difficult situation in Iraq.

Any new security initiative would clearly need to incorporate economic and political components as well as military. The key to measuring the success of offensives in Baghdad and throughout the country was not in tactical victories, but rather in the degree that US and Iraqi forces could win back control of economic and political space for the Iraqi government from sectarian groups.

Renewed Efforts in Baghdad

US and Iraqi government efforts to secure Baghdad during 2006 failed to halt the growth of violence in the city. The US acknowledged the deficiencies of Operation Together Forward, and President Bush's new strategy, announced on January 10, 2007, sought to remedy previous failures.⁵⁶ The new strategy had the potential to bring security to the capital, but due to the sectarian alliances of the population in Baghdad as well as members of the Iraqi security forces, success was far from guaranteed.

The Pentagon's August-November Stability and Security in Iraq Report described Operation Forward Together II as follows:⁵⁷

OTF II was launched as a means for reducing violence in Baghdad. OTF II began on August 7, 2006, and quickly led to a significant reduction in death squad activity, as extremists concentrated on hiding their weapons and evading capture during intensive search operations. However, as the operation progressed, death squads adapted to the new security environment and resumed their activities in areas not initially targeted by OTF II. During September, the levels of violence and civilians casualties increased and in some cases almost returned to levels seen in July. Shi'a death squads leveraged support from some elements of

the Iraqi Police Service and the National Police who facilitated freedom of movement and provided advance warning of upcoming operations. This is a major reason for the increased levels of murders and executions.

Tensions also rose between the US and Iraqi governments during the last few days of 2006. A joint US-Iraqi raid in Najaf – the province recently turned over to Iraqi control – killed a top Sadr aid, Sahib al-Amiri. The US military did not confirm Amiri's relationship with Sadr, but said they had collected intelligence on him for months and had evidence that he sold weapons used against US and Iraqi forces.⁵⁸ MNF-Iraq spokesman Maj. Gen. William Caldwell described Amiri as an "IED facilitator" and said that he was associated with an October 2006 IED attack on the police chief in Najaf. The raid had sought to detain Amiri, but when he aimed a weapon at an Iraqi soldier, a US soldier killed him.⁵⁹

Shi'ites protested in the streets of Najaf against US forces and al-Maliki demanded an explanation from the US military. The incident again showed the gap between the US-Iraqi military strategy of capturing individuals suspected of fomenting sectarian violence and al-Maliki's attempts to find a political compromise with al-Sadr – which would clearly prove impossible if Sadr lost additional close aides to US attacks.⁶⁰

Both sides did, however, try to find a new approach to securing Baghdad. On December 20, 2006 the *Washington Post* reported that Prime Minister Maliki had developed a new security plan for Baghdad. The initiative was still in its early stages, and it was unclear if it would receive support from enough parties. In the plan, Maliki urged US forces to aggressively target Sunni insurgents in outer Baghdad neighborhoods while he would work with al-Sadr to stop Mahdi Army attacks. If the Shi'ite militia did not stop fomenting sectarian violence, Maliki would crack down with the use of force.

Maliki indicated his government would accept a temporary surge of US forces in the capital – which was still under consideration by top US military and civilian commanders. Al-Maliki's advisers said that he feared marginalizing al-Sadr from the political process because it would escalate sectarian violence, but if the Mahdi Army did not stop attacks, US and Iraqi forces would take military action. One adviser said, "The prime minister, I can assure you, is not a fan of Moqtada Sadr in any way."

Maliki called for a major change of US military strategy, which at the end of 2006 was concentrated in Baghdad's center to curb sectarian reprisal attacks. Under Maliki's plan US forces would be concentrated mainly in the outer Sunni neighborhoods of the capital and Iraqi forces would take over security of central Baghdad. The plan was aimed at showing Shi'ites that government forces could protect everyday Iraqis and that militias were no longer needed. However, it seemed unlikely that Sunnis would accept a crackdown in their neighborhoods and control of Baghdad's center by Shi'ite security forces while Sadr was given extra time to tame his militia. Further, Sadr's control over rogue components of the Mahdi Army was doubtful at best.⁶¹

In any case the US pushed forward with a different response amid growing Sunni and Shi'ite tensions. MNF-Iraq spokesman Maj. Gen. William Caldwell reaffirmed that the mission to secure the capital was the responsibility of the Iraqi security forces and that would only become clearer in 2007. He did say that more Iraqi forces were needed in Baghdad and that the Defense Ministry had moved one battalion in.⁶²

On January 1, 2007 US troops led a raid on the Baghdad offices of Saleh Mutlaq, a Sunni and a senior member of the National Dialogue Front, which held 11 seats in Parliament. The US military and Iraqi police said they suspected the offices were being used as a safehouse by al-Qa'ida. The raid came as US and Iraqi troops sought to prevent retaliatory attacks the day after the execution of Saddam Hussein.⁶³

Throughout the second week of January, 1,000 US and Iraqi forces clashed with Sunni insurgents on Haifa Street in Baghdad, 1,000 yards from the Green Zone. The street was home to most of the top-ranking Ba'ath officials in previous years. Haifa Street had been secured in the spring of 2005, but troops were unable to stay and 'hold' the area.

Sources familiar with the operation said that security on Haifa Street deteriorated after the arrest of a top Mahdi Army official, which created an opening for Sunni insurgents to attack the minority Shi'ite civilians who had moved to the street from nearby Khadamiya. On January 6, 27 bodies were found in the Sheik Marouf neighborhood on Haifa Street, and all were Shi'ites. When Iraqi forces went to investigate, they were attacked by insurgents. US and Iraqi forces then began an offensive against the insurgents, which lasted at least four days and was only ended with the aid of US air power.

In the fighting on January 7, the *New York Times* reported that eleven Iraqi Army soldiers were killed when they ran out of ammunition. The fighting waged for eleven hours on January 9, showing how entrenched the insurgents were in the Haifa Street area. A Sunni resident said insurgents had taken over to such a degree that a top-ranking al-Qa'ida official "seized control of the Rafadin bank, set up an Islamic court and began handing out death sentences."⁶⁴

The key issue was the difference between the Maliki government focus on the Sunnis and the US focus on the extremists on both sides. On January 6 Prime Minister Maliki said that he was cracking down on Shi'ite militias and Sunni insurgents in Baghdad in a new security initiative. He did not give the details of the plan, but said that Iraqi troops would be doing door-to-door searches with the support of US troops. He said that the plan would come down hard on anyone operating outside the law, regardless of sectarian affiliation.⁶⁵

Sources close to al-Maliki said that the Iraqi leader wanted an additional 20,000 Iraqi troops to focus on Sunni insurgents and that he would work out a political solution with the Shi'ite militias.⁶⁶ Al-Maliki did say that the offensive was open ended and, "We are fully aware that implementing the plan will lead to some harassment of all beloved Baghdad residents, but we are confident they fully understand the brutal terrorist assault we all face."⁶⁷

In contrast, Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno, the US day-to-day commander of ground operations in Iraq, said that previous offensives in Baghdad failed to stop sectarian violence due to a shortage of Iraqi troops and a singular focus on Sunni neighborhoods. He said of Operation Together Forward:⁶⁸

We were able to clear areas. We were not able to hold the areas. We were not able to get security forces in there for an extended period of time that protected the people... I think what happened was we overestimated the availability of Iraqi security forces initially, we didn't have enough here. So we have to be able to make sure we have enough forces, Iraqi and coalition, in order to do it this time... You have to go after both Sunni and Shia neighborhoods. Together Forward was mostly focused on Sunni neighborhoods, and we've got to do both.

Odierno said, however, that Sadr was "working within the political system," and thus US forces would not seek him out personally.⁶⁹ The new offensive would target rogue Mahdi Army

militiamen. Odierno indicated that the US learned from the failures of Operation Together Forward. He also stated that the Iraqi government needed to come up with a militia policy because, "out of the militias, 80% of them are probably OK. We could probably immediately put them into either the police or the army."⁷⁰

By 2007, the US seemed to have pressured the Maliki government into accepting a more balanced approach. On January 10, 2007 President Bush outlined the official new strategy for the US in Iraq, and it was clear that Baghdad would be the tactical target location. President Bush stated:⁷¹

The most urgent priority of success in Iraq is security, especially in Baghdad. Eighty percent of Iraq's sectarian violence occurs within 30 miles of the capital. This violence is splitting Baghdad into sectarian enclaves, and shaking the confidence of all Iraqis. Only Iraqis can end the sectarian violence and secure their people. And the government has put forward an aggressive plan to do it...

Now let me explain the elements of this effort: The Iraqi government will appoint a military commander and two deputy commanders for their capital. The Iraqi government will deploy Iraqi Army and National Police brigades across Baghdad's nine districts. When these forces are fully deployed, there will be 18 Iraqi Army and National Police brigades committed to this effort, along with local police. These Iraqi forces will operate from local police stations – conducting patrols and setting up checkpoints, and going door to door to gain the trust of Baghdad residents...

This is a strong commitment. But for it to succeed, our commanders say the Iraqis will need our help. So America will change our strategy to help the Iraqi carry out their campaign to put down sectarian violence and bring security to the people of Baghdad. This will require increasing American force levels. So I've committed more than 20,000 additional American troops to Iraq. The vast majority of them – five brigades – will be deployed to Baghdad. These troops will work alongside Iraqi units and be embedded in their formations. Our troops will have a well-defined mission: to help Iraqis clear and secure neighborhoods, to help them protect the local population, and to help ensure that the Iraqi forces left behind are capable of providing the security that Baghdad needs...

Many tonight will ask why this effort will succeed when previous operations to secure Baghdad did not. Well, here are the differences: In earlier operations, Iraqi and American forces cleared many neighborhoods of terrorists and insurgents, but when our forces moved on to other targets, the killers returned. This time, we'll have the right force levels we need to hold the areas that have been cleared. In earlier operations, political and sectarian interference prevented Iraqi and American troops from going into neighborhoods that are home to those fueling the sectarian violence. This time, Iraqi and American forces will have the green light to enter those neighborhoods – and Prime Minister Maliki has pledged that political or sectarian interference will not be tolerated...

I've made it clear to the Prime Minister that America's commitment is not open-ended. If the Iraqi government does not follow through on its promises, it will lose the support of the American people – and it will lose the support of the Iraqi people. Now is the time to act...

Secretary of Defense Gates added more details at a press conference the following day:

The term "surge" has been used in relation to increasing U.S. troop levels, and an increase certainly will take place. But what is really going on and what is going to take place is a surge across all lines of operations: military and nonmilitary, Iraqi and coalition. The president's plan has Iraqis in the lead and seeks a better balance of U.S. military and nonmilitary efforts than was the case in the past. We cannot succeed in Iraq without the important nonmilitary elements Secretary Rice just mentioned.

The increase in military forces will be phased in. It will not unfold overnight. There will be no D-Day. It won't look like the Gulf War. The timetable for the introduction of additional U.S. forces will provide ample opportunity early on and before many of the additional U.S. troops actually arrive in Iraq to evaluate the progress of this endeavor and whether the Iraqis are fulfilling their commitments to us.

This updated plan builds on the lessons and experiences of the past. It places new emphasis on and adds new resources to the holding and building part of the clear, hold and build strategy.

There were 22,000 Iraqi Army forces operating in Baghdad at the time of Bush's speech. The new Iraqi deployment added 8,000, bringing the total, including national police, to around 50,000. The President's plan placed 41,000 US troops in the capital, including the 15,000 already operating in the greater Baghdad area at the start of 2007. Given the weaknesses in Iraqi forces, this meant the US would have to take the lead in the fighting as well as shaping the offensive.

At a joint press conference on January 15, however, General George Casey and Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad stated that the security plan for Baghdad was "designed, structured, and led by the Iraqis." Khalilzad also confirmed that the operation had no deadline, although plans to have Iraqi forces fully operational in the spring of 2007 and all provinces under Iraqi control by November were still in effect.

When asked how the US and Iraq were combating militias and sectarian violence outside of the capital, Gen. Casey said, "The Baghdad plan itself is integrated into a holistic countrywide plan that the multinational corps is developing. And security for Baghdad won't just come from securing the inside of Baghdad. It comes from the support zones around the outsides, as far away as you suggest – Baquba and Ramadi and Falluja. It goes all the way out to the borders to stop the flow of foreign fighters and support coming."⁷²

Gen. Petraeus expanded on the use of US and Iraqi forces – and the effectiveness of ISF – in Baghdad in answer to advance questions from the Senate Armed Services Committee for his nomination as Commanding General of US forces in Iraq:⁷³

Forces currently in or moving to Baghdad should be sufficient to conduct effective counterinsurgency operations given the anticipated political-military situation and planned phased operations...

Baghdad is a city of roughly 6 million people, so a 1:50 ratio of security forces to population would be equal to roughly 120,000 counterinsurgents. Iraqi Army, Police and Special Operations Forces, together with US forces currently on the ground or deploying to Baghdad in the months ahead, total approximately 85,000 – though, to be sure, not all of those are at the same levels of effectiveness, and some of the Police undoubtedly are of limited effectiveness. However, we do not necessarily have to secure every part of Baghdad at once – this can be done in stages – and will have to be done that way given the way the forces are expected to flow into Iraq. Beyond that, tens of thousands of ministry security forces and tens of thousands of civilian (often third country) contracted guard forces protect key sites in Baghdad (including, for example, the US embassy, MNSTC-I HQs, the Ministry of Oil, etc) that MNF-I and the Iraqi government would otherwise have to detail soldiers or police to protect. These forces, again, number in the tens of thousands – and although by no means all are of high capability and some are undoubtedly compromised, they do secure hundreds of sites that otherwise would require coalition or Iraqi military or police forces. Thus, with the additions of all five US brigades under orders to reinforce Baghdad and the Iraqi Security Forces either in Baghdad or headed to the city, there should be sufficient military forces available to achieve our objective of security Baghdad.

Uncertain Iraqi and US Agreement

Only days after President Bush announced the new strategy, American officials in Baghdad reported disagreements with Iraqi officials over the offensive. According to an article in the *New York Times*, the primary concern of US officials was that the Iraqi government would fail to follow through on its vow to attack Shi'ite militias. On official said, "We are implementing a

strategy to embolden a government that is actually part of the problem. We are being played like a pawn.”

There was also disagreement between the US and Iraq over the appointment of the Iraqi operational commander for the Baghdad offensive. Al-Maliki selected Lt. Gen. Aboud Qanbar – a Shi'ite from southern Iraq and unknown by most American commanders – despite opposition by the US military. Qanbar would be partnered with the commander of the US 1st Calvary Division, Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil Jr. Similar partnerships would continue down the chain of command, another issue troubling US officials.

Most of the statements from the US and Iraq seemed to indicate that Prime Minister Maliki would be in overall control. American officials, however, said that the superior authority was a council composed of Maliki, the ministers of defense and interior, the Iraqi national security advisor, and the top US commander in Iraq.⁷⁴

When asked if he understood the command and control relationships between US and Iraqi forces in the Baghdad security plan, Gen. Petraeus said:⁷⁵

This is an exceedingly important issue. Getting the relationship between our forces and the Iraqi security forces right is critical to operating together. At its simplest, US commanders will command and retain operational control of US forces; Iraqi commanders will command Iraqi forces and exercise operational control over them once transitioned from the tactical control of US forces (this has taken place for the 6th Division and in the case of many other Iraqi units in recent months). If confirmed, I intend to ensure that there is very close cooperation between US and Iraq headquarters to ensure unity of effort, careful coordination of operations, and clear knowledge of what each force is doing. Of necessity, this will include Iraqi and US Special Operations Forces and Police Forces as well. As I understand it, the Baghdad plan is to be an Iraqi Plan, devised by the Iraqis in consultation with, and supported by, MNF-I and MNC-I, and US Forces, under the command of US commanders, will act in support of the Iraqi effort to establish security in Baghdad.

Another key concern was logistics – such as supplies for Iraqi troops. US officials also said that there were plans to build 30 to 40 “joint security stations” in Baghdad, but that many would need to be expanded and reinforced before they could house American and Iraqi operation centers.⁷⁶

Gen. Petraeus expanded on the use of joint security stations:⁷⁷

As explained to me, under the Baghdad Security Plan, Coalition forces will establish Joint Security Stations (JSSs) with the Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police, and the Iraqi National Police. The stations will be strategically positioned throughout the city to accommodate dispersed, joint patrols, and to provide central command and control hubs that ultimately feed back into the Baghdad Security Command. The establishment of JSSs will include enhancing force protection and developing essential sustainment and life support. Many of the JSSs are located at existing Iraqi Police Stations, but will require vulnerability assessments prior to occupation by coalition forces. Based on these assessments the necessary force protection enhancements will be completed to mitigate the risks of attack. Force protection enhancements will include improvements such as entry control points, external barriers to redirect traffic flows and/or reinforce perimeters, increased protection from indirect fires, and guard posts/towers where required. Additionally, robust Quick Reaction Forces, as well as redundant and secure communications with parent FOBs and with coalition patrols operating in the area, will enhance the force protection posture of each JSS.

The use of Kurdish troops presented further problems. Kurdish troops were to compose two of the three Iraqi army brigades sent to Baghdad. The use of Sunni Kurdish forces was supposed to reduce instances of sectarianism in the Iraqi security forces in the Baghdad offensive, but some Kurdish leaders thought it would exacerbate the problem. Mahmoud Othman, a member of the Iraqi Kurdish Coalition said, “There are fears that a fight like this, pitting Kurds against the

Arabs, is bound to add an ethnic touch to the conflict. I am against the move... and there are many in the Iraqi parliament who are against it too.”

Critics of the Kurdish forces also said that they were fighting for the Kurdistan Regional Government, not Iraq as a whole. The use of Kurdish forces in the capital was clearly a risk, but they were among the better equipped and trained, and therefore had the potential to play a key role.⁷⁸

Gen. Petraeus said of the use of Kurdish units:⁷⁹

I have confidence in the expected performance of these units, though there are likely to be challenges due to language issues (few of their enlisted soldiers speak Arabic) and, possibly, due to operation away from predominantly Kurdish areas for the first time (though some of the battalions did serve in mixed-ethnic areas in the vicinity of Mosul). In considering other factors, there has been little in the way of corruption or other sectarian issues reported in these units. Additionally, because of their combat experience and predominantly Kurdish soldiers, there tends to be a higher level of cohesion in these formations. Because of their home locations, there is a lower likelihood these units will have issues with infiltration by anti-government entities. Finally, commanders involved in training these units, as well as their Coalition advisors, assess that they are unlikely to be biased when conducting operations in the locations to which they are being assigned.

The Iraqi government did, however, take action against the militias. In an interview on January 17 Prime Minister Maliki said that 400 Mahdi militiamen had been recently arrested. Some Mahdi militiamen said that they were reducing their presence on the streets of the capital in preparation for what they believed was a US military offensive targeting the militia.

Mahdi militiamen interviewed by the *New York Times* said that they wanted to avoid full scale confrontation with the US because it would reduce their status and potentially their income, which many young men had grown accustomed to. The Mahdi army, they said, would fade into the crowd rather than confront the US head on, as Sadr did in 2004.⁸⁰

This illustrated a key potential problem in dealing with sectarian conflict. Regardless of whether the Mahdi army engaged US forces, the widespread popular support for the militia and the thousands of fighters in Baghdad alone meant that neither the US nor the Iraqis could capture them all. This fact underscored the point that victory in Iraq could no longer be gauged by tactical successes; the growing sectarianism and ethnic conflict meant that the fight for all sides was for control of political and economic space.

For example, the Times article noted that residents of the majority Shi'ite neighborhood of Topchi paid 3,000 Iraqi dinars a month to support the local Mahdi Army members, who “are members of the council, and they arrange trash collections and housing for Shiite refugees, often settling them into empty Sunni homes.”⁸¹

A New Strategy for Diyala

In mid to late 2006 security in Diyala deteriorated to the point that Sunni insurgents walked the streets in Baquba, bodies were found daily on city streets, insurgents and militias used intimidation campaigns to force the relocation of thousands of people, the Iraqi security forces were infiltrated by militias and not trusted by much of the population, and reconstruction ground to a halt.

Diyala was 55% Sunni with abundant farmland and untapped oil resources, making it a strategic province for both Sunni and Shi'ite armed groups. Sunni insurgents in Diyala, where a US

airstrike killed Zarqawi, were composed of al-Qa'ida in Iraq, Ansar al Sunna, but primarily the Shura Council and the 1920 Revolutionary Army, according to US officials.

Although the US maintained a strong presence in Diyala, Iraqi security forces were supposed to carry out most of the missions. The US strategy in 2006 was to train and equip ISF while taking a hands off approach. ISF in Diyala, however, were overwhelmingly Shi'a and not trusted by the Sunni majority. The provincial commander was hand picked by the Badr Brigade. Shi'ite police did not dare enter many Sunni towns and thus insurgents had a virtual safehaven. In a video in November, insurgents were seen on the streets pulling Shi'ites out of their homes and killing them, leaving little doubt about who held the real control.

Members of the US 1st Cavalry Division took over security in Diyala in October 2006, and decided on a major change in strategy. The US, with Iraqi help, would launch a counterinsurgency campaign to root out both Sunni insurgents and Shi'ite militias. US troops, however, had to convince the Iraqi ground forces commander, General Shakir, to change his strategy. Shakir had been accused of allowing torture of Sunni captives and bullying and abusing Sunni civilians.

Colonel Sutherland, commander of the 3rd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, said that after several joint raids, General Shakir agreed to adopt a classic counterinsurgency campaign and refrain from intimidation of Sunni civilians. Sunni tribal chiefs, however, said that they wanted to cooperate with US forces, but would not until the security situation improved and General Shakir was replaced.

Once again, tactical victories also meant counterinsurgency, but did not provide for the "hold and build" aspect. Diyala Province was in desperate need of basic services at the start of 2007. There was little clean water and most shops in Baquba remained closed. The new US initiative acknowledged that the previous hands off approach did not work in a province dominated by a Shi'ite council and police forces, but with a Sunni majority. The goal was to make city streets safe enough that shops could reopen and supplies could reach their destination, but US and Iraqi forces would most likely face a tough battle against insurgents and militias who saw the province for its vital strategic importance.⁸²

The growing violence outside Baghdad presented other problems. In early January 2007 the *Los Angeles Times* reported on a new initiative in Diyala province – located just north of Baghdad and bordering Iran – to restore security. On January 4, 2007 1,000 US and Iraqi forces launched the first offensive in the new counterinsurgency strategy. US military officials said the strike targeted a series of farms and irrigation canals suspected of housing weapons caches, safe houses, and training ranges. However, smoke-signals and flares from the target area as well as deep trenches and interdiction of canal bridges indicated that insurgents were prepared for the attack.

US commanders from the 3rd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Div. said that details of the offensive were kept secret from the 400 Iraqi soldiers of the 5th Army Div. According to the *Los Angeles Times* article, the launch of the joint operation was chaotic as Iraqi army vehicles started off in the wrong direction and blocked the road. By the time the forces reached the insurgent stronghold, no possible insurgents remained.

Lt. Col. Andrew Poppas for the 3rd Brigade said of insurgents in Diyala, "We will never kill or capture them all, and even if we do, there are plenty more who will take their place,"

acknowledging the 'undrainable swamp'. He added, "Our success, in my view, will be based on continued presence, denying this place as a safehaven."⁸³

On January 7, US air power and joint US-Iraqi ground forces attacked the series of irrigation canals in Hamoud – near Balad Ruz - Diyala Province, where US and Iraqi forces expected hundreds of insurgents to be hiding. The previous day, troops burned the high reeds in the area give them a better view for the air assault. The US military said they killed 21-armed insurgents in the assault.

However, a series of anti-tank mines and extreme mud slowed the ground assault and killed two Iraqi soldiers and wounded 27. When forces reached the town of Hamoud, they again found only woman and children. The overall operation took five days and wore heavily on Iraqi and US troops, but US commanders believed they had trapped many of the insurgents in underground caves and bunkers.⁸⁴

On January 22 a US Army spokesman from the 3rd Brigade reported that security conditions in Diyala were steadily improving. He said that people began to reopen shops that had been closed for months. The offensive in Hamoud killed one-hundred members of the Shura Council and US and Iraqi troops detained an additional fifty.

However, only minutes before the announcement of improving conditions, insurgents claiming to be members of Ansar al-Sunna kidnapped the Mayor of Baquba, Khalid al-Sanjari. Witnesses said that the insurgents did not take any guards, and clearly came with a purpose.⁸⁵

Progress and Problems in Anbar Province

Anbar remained a major problem in both military and political terms. A tribal Sheik and a member of Sawa – the organization formed by Sheiks in the fall of 2006 to counteract al-Qa'ida and recruit policemen - said that his "forces" had significantly reduced the number of weapons and foreign fighters in Anbar, but that there were thousands of al-Qa'ida fighters left in Anbar alone. He said that al-Qa'ida was responsible for 30% to 40% of insurgency in Iraq. He believed that many al-Qa'ida fighters and weapons came from the neighboring countries of Syria and Saudi Arabia.⁸⁶

In early January an official in a tribal council in the western province of Anbar said an insurgent leader from Ansar al-Sunna had been captured and two of his aides, both from Yemen, were killed near Ramadi. In addition, Iraqi troops arrested Ibrahim al-Jouburi, known as the Prince of al Qaeda in Yusufiya, and Abdullah al-Zoubai, leader of the 20th Revolutionary Brigades group in Yusufiya.

The Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. James T. Conway, said in December 2006 that he did not think a surge of US troops would help security in Anbar, rather, he said that the marines there needed more time to do their job. He said, "I fear there are two timelines out there. One is how long it's going to take us to do the job. One is how long the country is going to allow us to do the job. And they're not syncing up."

Roughly 20,000 marines were deployed in Anbar at the end of 2006. Conway was among other top military officials who urged the President not to send a surge of US troops in 2007. Conway added that units would be most likely extended beyond their scheduled return dates in 2007, but that he hoped to increase time at home between deployments.⁸⁷

In his January 10 speech, however, President Bush announced that 4,000 additional US troops would be sent to Anbar Province.⁸⁸ The military also continued to try new political initiatives. In early January the US marines in al-Anbar opened dialogue with several women's groups in Anbar in hope that women would persuade their husbands and sons to fight against the insurgency. The military called the program the 'Woman's Engagement Program'.⁸⁹

V. Transferring Control to Iraqi Forces

US forces continued to nominally transfer control to Iraqi forces. On December 20, 2006 US forces handed over provincial control of Najaf Province to Iraq, making it the third province to be transferred. The original target goal for Iraqi security forces (ISF), 325,000, was reached by the end of 2006, but many had deserted, were on unauthorized leave, were not operational, or had died in the violence. Maliki had previously authorized the addition of at least 30,000 Iraqi forces.

The Department of Defense Stability and Security Report to Congress for August – November noted that the number of trained and equipped ISF reported by MNF was not the number that would report for duty; “The trained and equipped number should not be confused with present duty strength. The number of present for duty soldiers and police is much lower, due to scheduled leave, absence without leave, and attrition.”⁹⁰ The report also said that the most significant challenge remaining for ISF was the “reformation of the Ministry of Interior police force and the development of ISF logistics and sustainment capabilities.”⁹¹

Colonel Miska of the First Infantry Division told the *New York Times* about the most difficult problems he faced in training Iraqi Security Forces. He believed, “Everyone, to some extent, is influenced by the militias. While some Iraqi security forces may be complicit with militias, others fear for their families when confronting the militia, and that is the more pervasive threat.”

Miska said that one of the primary problems was that the Iraqi army answered to the Ministry of Defense and the police answered to the Ministry of Interior and the Facilities Protection Service (FPS) did not really answer to anybody. His main goal was to try and establish some kind of unity of command on the battlefield. He described the situation as “an orchestra where everybody is playing a different song.”⁹²

The DoD report did say, however, that the President and Maliki had developed a working group to accelerate the training of ISF, Iraqi assumption of operational control, and transfer of security responsibilities to Iraq. As of November 13, 2006, 6 Division Headquarters, 30 Brigade Headquarters, and 91 Iraqi Army battalions had assumed lead for counter-insurgency operations within their assigned areas of operations. Of these, however, “most still required substantial logistics and sustainment support from Coalition forces. Of the MOI’s National Police’s 27 authorized battalions, 5 are in the lead; of brigade headquarters, 1 is in the lead.” As of October 2006, MNF-I had handed over 52 of its 110 Forward Operating Bases to Iraqi authorities.⁹³

US forces in Anbar Province said that leadership among enlisted Iraqis in the army was lacking. US marines said that performance fell dramatically after a roadside bomb killed a much-respected Iraqi sergeant. A US trainer said that the enlisted men were very reliant on one or two strong leaders and did not have a “broad based approach to decision making.” Marines also said that information was sometimes withheld from the Iraqi army on joint patrols because of the fear that soldiers would tell insurgents.⁹⁴

Further, the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq Human Rights Report for November – December said, “Iraqi law enforcement institutions are marred by corruption and increasing internal and sectarian divisions. Iraqi police are seen as having being infiltrated by or colluding with militias, insurgency and political parties, depending on the area where they operate.”⁹⁵

Police forces, especially the regular police, continued to be accused of supporting militia components. Iraqi police were not trusted by Sunnis and some Shi'ites and the Iraqi army did not have the force strength or training to secure the country. The Iraq Study Group quoted a senior American general who summed up the US police training efforts; "2006 was supposed to be 'the year of the police' but it hasn't materialized that way."⁹⁶ Gen. Chiarelli stated, "The Year of the Police is going to take us longer than we thought it was going to take us."⁹⁷

The *Washington Post* reported in late December that Iraqi officials were working on efforts to reform the Iraqi police forces and weed out the roughly 25% of policemen thought to have ties with militias, according to US Lt. Gen. Martin Dempsey. In a Pentagon news conference, Dempsey said, "My message to you is that Iraq is reaching out to take control of its own security." He also said that for the most part, Iraqi policemen did not support sectarian violence, but the exception was the national police.⁹⁸

On 22 December nearly 1,000 British troops carried out a dawn raid in Basra to seize an Iraqi police chief accused of sectarian attacks. A British military spokesman said, "The purpose of this raid is not just to apprehend this individual, but it is the precursor to disbanding the Serious Crimes Unit of the Basra police." There was evidence that the police chief was involved in the 29 October death of 17 employees of a British-run police training academy.⁹⁹

Three days later a combined British and Iraqi force of 1,400 again raided the police station and razed it to the ground. Troops killed seven gunmen and rescued 127 prisoners being held by the Serious Crimes Unit in Basra. The British military said that most prisoners showed signs of torture and were held in very poor conditions.

Basra's police chief condemned the raid, but residents in Basra privately told the *New York Times* that they welcomed the end of the Unit because it was widely infiltrated by militias and used terrorist tactics. Policemen belonging to the Serious Crimes Unit attacked British and Iraqi forces as they moved through Basra in the pre-dawn raid, but troops faced little resistance as they reached the police station. The prisoners were handed over to the regular Iraqi police in Basra.¹⁰⁰

The US military did announce that December 2006 was a very successful recruiting month for police forces in Anbar; 1,115 men signed up, 600 in Ramadi alone. MNF-Iraq spokesman Maj. Gen. William Caldwell said that this was a significant improvement from zero recruits at the beginning of 2006. He did, however, put the numbers in perspective; "There are still significant shortcomings in the Iraqi security forces. Iraqi security forces suffer from deficiencies in logistics, leaderships, and in some cases loyalty. That is why the multinational force is consistently and continuously reassessing and strengthening how we train, advise and assist the Iraqi forces."¹⁰¹

In Ramadi US and Iraqi forces faced terrorist attacks on an almost daily basis. Police stations had been attacked twice in recent weeks, with Iraqi forces fighting back, Army officials said. Yet in early January Iraqi army and police forces conducted house-to-house searches for terrorists for the first time on their own, with only US logistics and communication help.

US marines stayed behind to finish the construction of the Ramadi police outpost, a 2000 sq. feet structure due to be completed on January 7. U.S. Army Lt. Col. Miciotto Johnson, the task force commander, said the operation would be a turning point for the Tamim neighborhood in Ramadi because it would provide a police station for the first time. Further, the Iraqi police provided security for a local university, and Ramadi General Hospital, once virtually abandoned, had

hundreds of patients and some schools opened for the first time in months. The progress was slow and casualties on both sides remained high, but US forces were encouraged.¹⁰²

Equipment also presented serious problems. On 16 December, 2006, the US military said that it was seeking a contractor to provide armor for 1,300 SUVs used by the Iraqi National Police. In the previous two years many Iraqi policemen were killed or wounded by small arms fire and IEDs while operating in their US-issued vehicles. The US received complaints throughout the training process that ISF were underequipped.¹⁰³

The US military recognized the need to rein in the Facilities Protection Service and announced an initiative to control the 150,000 member ministerial guard force. The Iraq Study Group described the force as having “questionable loyalties and capabilities.” Many FPS troops were employed by the Health Ministry – controlled by Sadr – and were believed to members of the Mahdi Army. The Department of Defense report, “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq”, said there was only “anecdotal evidence” that the FPS was incapable, but the evidence seemed to point to widespread corruption and sectarian loyalties.

Al-Maliki announced in August 2006 that the FPS would be consolidated and brought under the wing of the Interior Ministry, and that process finally began in early 2007. Lt. Gen. Dempsey, US Commander of the Multinational Security Transition Command in Iraq, said that he would work closely with the MOI to make sure the FPS was brought under control.¹⁰⁴

US officials and commanders still issued plans for the quick handover of security to Iraqis, particularly in Baghdad, but neither the Americans nor the Iraqis had enough troops to combat the rising level of violence and engage in substantial training efforts. Within the training effort, the US shifted from a strategy of building up the Iraqi police to address internal security concerns to beefing up the Iraqi Army, which was more trusted and less sectarian than the police.¹⁰⁵

President Bush repeated this theme in his speech on the new strategy for Iraq on January 10, “We will help the Iraqis build a larger and better-equipped army, and we will accelerate the training of Iraqi forces, which remains the essential US security mission in Iraq.” He also restated the increased adviser mission of US embeds with the Iraqi security forces. The new strategy for Baghdad was to be led by roughly 18 Iraqi Army and National Police Brigades, the President said. The readiness of the Iraqi brigades, however, was unclear and US troops would most likely lead the majority of the offensives.¹⁰⁶

On January 17 Prime Minister Maliki stated that Iraq's reliance on US forces would fall in three to six months if America accelerated the process of equipping Iraqi security forces. He also said that many American and Iraqi lives would have been saved if the US had properly equipped ISF in previous years. An aide to the Prime Minister said that the Iraqi leader wanted heavier weapons because the weaponry of militias and insurgents was superior to that of the ISF.

In answers to advance questions from the Senate Armed Services Committee before his nomination hearing, Lt. Gen. David H. Petraeus emphasized the importance of US military and police transition teams:¹⁰⁷

There is an unquestionable linkage between ISF progression and the embedded transition team program. Despite the success achieved by the embedding of transition teams, the current Military Transition Team size is insufficient to meet all operational requirements and permit an optimum level of support. The commander of MNC-Iraq has initiated a plan to enhance MTTs to increase their effectiveness. Based on

conditions within each multi-national division area of responsibility, primarily relating to levels of violence and ISF capacity for independent operations, MTTs are being augmented by assets controlled by their respective MND Commanders. US brigade combat teams are the primary resource providers for these enhancements. Enhanced MTTs have the ability to advise ISF units down to the company level...

The current size, structure, and number of Police Transition Teams is appropriate for the mission they are assigned. There are three different types of PTTs: station, district, and provincial. The nucleus of all PTTs is a military police squad with additional US Army personnel added at the district and professional level...

Throughout Iraq, the enhancement of the baseline MTTs will continue based on an assessment of the security situation in each MND Area of Responsibility. The estimate provided to me by the MNF-I staff is that it will take 6-12 months to move to enhanced MTTs throughout Iraq. Continuing and expanding the transition team program over time will energize ISF progression and eventually facilitate a change in relationship as the embedded transition teams move more toward the advising role and less toward mentoring or even, to a degree, leading...

The current ration of PTTs at the station, district, and provincial levels is adequate, but we also need to relocate some PTTs from provinces that have moved to Provincial Iraqi Control to provinces that have not achieved PIO. International Police Liaison Officers (IPLO) and interpreters are absolutely essential to successful PTT operations. MNC-I continues to have difficulty recruiting and fielding new interpreters; additional emphasis and incentives need to be established to retain the qualified interpreters we currently employ. Additionally, if the IPLO program is ended too soon, the lack of this law enforcement expertise and experience would have a significant and adverse impact. A recommendation for making the IPLO program even better is to recruit law enforcement experts from other Middle Eastern nations (such as Jordan, Egypt, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia etc) into the program.

VI. Reconstruction and Development Efforts: Stumbling on the Building Blocks

Reconstruction efforts were hampered by the security crisis and the lack of and misuse of funding. Reconstruction only began to receive the attention it deserved in mid 2006, but by that point the security crisis prevented significant progress. Economic growth in 2006 hit 4% - well below the 10% goal – inflation lingered around 50%, and unemployment averaged about 40%, although it reached 60% in Anbar Province.¹⁰⁸

Despite some progress, high levels of corruption and the more pressing need for security overshadowed successes.

In his speech on January 10, President Bush announced added reconstruction efforts to support his new strategy:¹⁰⁹

...To show that it is committed to delivering a better life, the Iraqi government will spend \$10 billion of its own money on reconstruction and infrastructure projects that will create new jobs...

We will give our commanders and civilians greater flexibility to spend funds for economic assistance. We will double the number of provincial reconstruction teams. These teams help bring together military and civilian experts to help local Iraqi communities pursue reconciliation, strengthen the moderates, and speed the transition to Iraqi self-reliance. And Secretary Rice will soon appoint a reconstruction coordinator in Baghdad to ensure better results for economic assistance being spent in Iraq...

In a press conference the following day Condoleezza Rice provided further details:

To oversee our economic support for the Iraqi people, and to ensure that it is closely integrated with our security strategy, I have appointed Tim Carney to the new position of coordinator for Iraq Transitional Assistance. He will be based in Baghdad and will work with Iraqi counterparts to facilitate a maximum degree of coordination in our economic and development efforts.

Our decentralization of effort in Iraq will require a more decentralized presence. We must continue to get civilians and diplomats out of our embassy, out of the capital, and into the field, all across the country. The mechanism to do this is the Provincial Reconstruction Team, or PRT. We currently have ten PRTs deployed across Iraq, seven American and three coalition. Building on this existing presence, we plan to expand from 10 to at least 18 teams. For example, we will have six PRTs in Baghdad, not just one. We will go from one team in Anbar province to three – in Fallujah, Ramadi, and al Qaim. These PRTs will closely share responsibilities and reflect an unprecedented unity of civilian and military effort.

Expanding our PRT presence will also enable us to diversify our assistance across all of Iraq. Iraq has a federal government. Much of the street-level authority, and much of the opportunity for positive change in Iraq, lies outside the Green Zone, in local and provincial governments, with party leaders and tribal chiefs. By actively supporting these provincial groups and structures, we diversify our chances of success in Iraq. Our PRTs have had success working at the local level in towns like Mosul, Tikrit, and Tal Afar. Now we will invest in other parts of Iraq, like Anbar province, where local leaders are showing their desire and building their capacity to confront violent extremists and build new sources of hope for their people.

All total, we seek to deploy hundreds of additional civilians across Iraq to help Iraqis build their nation. And we will ask Congress to provide funding to support and secure our expanded civilian presence. We want to give our civilians, deployed in PRTs, the flexibility to devote extra resources where they can do the most good at the local level. Our expanded PRT presence will be a powerful tool to empower Iraq's reformers and responsible leaders in their struggle against violent extremism. We therefore plan to request, as part of our FY 2007 Supplemental, significant new operating funds for our PRTs, as well as hundreds of million of dollars to fund their programs. When we add in relevant USAID projects, we hope to approximately double our resource commitment to help local Iraqi communities through PRTs.

These commitments will not be indefinite. As I said earlier, one of our main objectives in this phase is to help the Iraqis use their own money to rebuild their country. The Iraqis have budgeted billions of dollars for this mission in 2007, and as their efforts become more effective, we have kept our FY 2008 requests limited. We want Iraqis to rely more and more on their own resources, their own people, and their own efforts. Therefore, by 2008 and 2009, the burden of local assistance should be assumed more effectively by the Iraqi government. In the meantime, though, our efforts will be vital.

These plans were not without promise, but they understated or ignored the massive problems the US had in recruiting the existing PRTs. These delayed the operation of many PRTs until later in 2006 and still left some either inactive or staffed largely with inexperienced personnel and military personnel assigned to duties that required civilian expertise. Only 13 teams were authorized. Only 10 teams were fully operational, with some 170 non-Department of Defense civilians and 180 soldiers, when 18 were needed to have even one per governorate. Auditors found in October 2006 that only four of the 13 teams could actually be effective in their satellite offices, and that massive security and transportation problems severely limited the work of the PRT effort. There were less than 120 non-DoD civilians in place, including support personnel.¹¹⁰

It is also far from clear how quickly the US can act in getting aid into the field; how it can cope with Iraqi corruption, inefficiency, and factionalism; and whether it can time serious aid efforts to provide immediate support to its security efforts. Every single major US and Iraqi effort of this kind to date had failed dismally to live up to its promises, and every claim to the contrary had misstated the facts, puffed up minor or temporary successes, or been a lie. Moreover, the US had to suddenly make sudden reversals in its past efforts that focused on long-term projects and major construction and find ways of aiding Iraq's state industries, effectively dispensing microcapital loans, and dealing with other aid projects that require effective US personnel, and honest and effective Iraqi government personnel, in the field. This had to be done in the areas which were now most violent and which were certain to have serious lingering problems no matter how effective US and Iraqi forces were during the course of 2007.¹¹¹

Figure 3 shows the PRT's classification of readiness of Iraqi provinces. Anbar and Basra provinces were deemed the least ready for Iraqi control, and Baghdad was partially ready. These projections by the PRTs, however, were not based on sufficient evidence and did not reflect the reality on the ground.

Figure 3: The Unready Judges the Unready: Provincial Security Transition Team Assessment

| | |
|--------------|--------------------------------|
| Anbar | Not Ready for Transition |
| Ninewa | Partially Ready for Transition |
| Dahuk | Ready for Transition |
| Arbil | Ready for Transition |
| Sulamaniyah | Ready for Transition |
| Tamim | Partially Ready for Transition |
| Salah ad Din | Partially Ready for Transition |
| Diyala | Partially Ready for Transition |
| Baghdad | Partially Ready for Transition |
| Karbala | Partially Ready for Transition |
| Babil | Partially Ready for Transition |
| Wasit | Partially Ready for Transition |
| Najaf | Partially Ready for Transition |
| Qadisiyah | Partially Ready for Transition |
| Muthanna | Provincial Iraqi Control |
| Dhi Qar | Provincial Iraqi Control |
| Maysan | Partially Ready for Transition |
| Basra | Not Ready for Transition |

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense, Quarterly Report to Congress, November 2006, p. 28

The Problems of Rule of Law and Corruption

Iraq's political, military, and economic problems interacted with the lack of an affective rule of law and capability of government. The rule of law suffered from overcrowded prisons, insufficient numbers of judges and attorneys who experienced constant threats on their lives, rapidly conducted and inadequate trials, and a lack of communication between US forces, Iraqi forces, and the Iraqi government. The high level of corruption in the government and Ministries provided a poor example to other institutions. Favoritism, nepotism, and mismanagement of money at the local and provincial levels often had sectarian ties and contributed to the control of economic and political space by ethnic groups.

The Pentagon completed a classified assessment of the Iraqi criminal justice system in June 2006 and found that the area in which progress was made was convicting former senior government officials. Yet all other aspects, such as training judges to increasing the number of courts, fell behind schedule. The assessment said, "Iraq's judiciary is technically independent but unable and unwilling to assert itself or provide a balance to Iraq's powerful political parties. The criminal justice system is overloaded and lacks the capacity to consistently process those arrested and/or detained."

The security crisis and lack of resources hindered another one of the idealistic pillars of democracy. A State Department official who tried to create a system to train and pay defense lawyers said her plan was never financed in part because, "judicial planning was dominated by American prosecutors who took a dim view of defense lawyers." It appeared that the Iraqi criminal justice system posed another reason for Iraqis to distrust their government, and US forces.¹¹²

The August-November Department of Defense Stability and Security Report stated, "Political stability in Iraq is predicated on achieving the rule of law. The rule of law requires a functional legal code, police to investigate crimes and enforce laws, criminal and civil courts to administer justice, and prisons to incarcerate offenders." The Pentagon assessed, however, "Although progress continues, development and implementation of rule of law initiatives has been slow, contributing to crime, corruption, and the proliferations of illegal armed groups. Mistrust between the police forces and the judiciary further hampers progress in the development of the rule of law."

The report said that the Iraqi Constitution was vague on some rights and freedoms. It also said that within the police forces, "corruption and smuggling are becoming more organized and entrenched," because there was little emphasis on training and investigating criminal activities. To combat that problem, the Ministry of Interior was planning to add thousands of forensic specialists to the police forces, who would be trained by MNSTC-I.

The Pentagon's update reported on the many problems in Iraqi courts. The Constitution allowed suspects to see a judge within 24 hours, but that rarely happened due to "an acute shortage of investigative judges, prosecutors, judicial investigators, and trial judges, and systemic inefficiencies, including the lack of cooperation and communication between the police and the judiciary."

In November 2006, Iraq had 800 investigative and trial judges and 100 courts – not nearly enough for the massive number of detainees. The Iraqi government instituted several training programs to try and increase the number of judges for 2007. The DoD report noted that corruption in the judiciary was less rampant than other areas of the government, but instead the problem was “judicial intimidation and lack of security.” Throughout the insurgency and proceeding civil conflict, judges received threats and were frequently attacked. This intimidation thus led to judges to “fail to report to work, resign from their positions, fear reaching verdicts against powerful defendants, and, in the provinces, decline to investigate and try insurgent and terrorism related cases.” The DoD report called for a judicial security force and a more secure court system that would help the retention rate of judges.

The November Stability and Security Report also said that Ministry of Interior detention facilities in Iraq “are overcrowded, with substandard facilities and poor accountability for persons detained.” Ministry of Defense detention facilities were acceptable, but only housed post-conviction criminals.¹¹³

As for corruption in the political ministries, the report stated:¹¹⁴

Corruption in the ministries had hampered their capabilities. Many of Iraq's political factions tend to view government ministries and their associated budgets as sources of power, patronage, and funding for their parties. Ministers without strong party ties face significant pressure from political factions and sometimes have little control over the politically appointed and connected people serving under them. This corruption erodes public confidence in the elected government.

The November – December 2006 UN Assistance Mission for Iraq Human Rights report summarized the rule of law in Iraq:¹¹⁵

Conditions of detention, including overcrowding and poorly run facilities, as well as lack of judicial oversight remain the main human rights concerns. Many detainees, especially in the south, are kept in facilities that are reportedly not fit for human use. Furthermore, the current number of detainees that need to be brought before a judge continues to outstrip the capacity of the Iraqi criminal courts to adjudicate cases. HRO recognizes the enormous challenges faced by the Iraqi judiciary, especially in the current security context. The work of the judiciary is further hampered by the repeated disregard of judicial orders by the police and by the constant threats and actual killing of judges which calls into question the independence of the judiciary and the genuine commitment by the authorities to develop a State based on the rule of law.

The *New York Times* reported on that a severe lack of judges and prosecution lawyers and a hastily compiled court system were the basis of the problem. The Times stated, “Almost every aspect of the judicial system is lacking, poorly serving not just detainees but also Iraqi citizens and troops trying to maintain order.”

Lawyers assigned by the court to represent Iraqi and US held detainees met their defendants only minutes before trials began. Judges often ignored requests by lawyers to present arguments – in the cases that lawyers knew what crime the defendant had allegedly committed. An American lawyer said that in the 100 cases he tried, none of the defense attorneys had presented evidence or witnesses. Trials lasted fifteen minutes on average as judges attempted to reduce the numerous detainee population. Since 2003, the US held about 61,500 prisoners and at the end of 2006 held 14,000, but only 3,000 has been charged and tried in Iraqi courts. No numbers were available on Iraqi held detainees.

Iraqi judges sometimes handed out severe sentences for when defendants had no time to call witnesses or talk with their lawyers. In 2006, judges committed 14 American held detainees to

death by hanging. US forces, however, complained that the Iraqi government requested the release of tens of thousands of detainees – 6% of whom the US recaptured in other criminal acts. According to the *Times* article, the Iraqi courts acquitted roughly half of the defendants at the end of 2006, but it was often because of “political interference, and threats from militants” on judges’ lives. However, in about 4% of cases, the US did not release detainees who had been acquitted by Iraqi courts because they remained a “serious threat.”

The US military responded by trying to acquire better evidence at crime scenes. US soldiers turned detectives used forensic evidence and photography to better present cases against alleged criminals. Yet individuals were often mass arrested at crime scenes and put into the overcrowded detention facilities where it took weeks to release those who had simply been at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Miscalculation of government funds and corruption continued to be serious problems. In early January the *Los Angeles Times* acquired the proposed 2007 Iraqi budget. The *Times* reported that nearly \$2 billion was allocated to agencies “beyond the oversight of the central government.” Iraqi officials also said that most Ministries got millions in funds called “social benefits” that had few spending safeguards. Further, the draft called for cuts to the Public Integrity Commission - which investigated corruption – by 13%.

The most contentious issue in the budget – and one that Sunni lawmakers refused to accept – was the allocation of \$230 million to victims of the Hussein government. Yet the budget only planned to spend \$6 million on victims of internal displacement, a figure which the UN put at 1.8 million.

The budget did include an increase of 60% to funds for improving the country’s infrastructure and 50% for Health and Education. The largest chunk of the total budget was allocated to Iraqi security forces. The Sunni controlled Defense Ministry would receive roughly the same amount as in 2006 -- \$4 billion – despite planned personnel increases and the need for equipment. Funds to the Shi’ite controlled Interior Ministry, however, would increase 25% to \$2 billion.

The entire 2007 budget was 21% larger than the previous year’s, an increase that raised questions by even the Prime Minister’s closest allies, the *Times* reported. In addition, the total figure did not include the extra \$8 billion that Ministries failed to spend in 2006 on reconstruction projects and funds from the international community. The budget, like other key issues, reflected sectarianism and little evidence of compromise. Sunnis were unlikely to vote for the proposal in its current draft form.¹¹⁶

Economic Indicators

Sectarian and other violence had economic causes as well. Lt. Gen. Peter W. Chiarelli said in December 2006, “We need to put the angry young men to work. One of the key hindrances to us establishing stability in Iraq is the failure to get the economy going. A relatively small decrease in unemployment would have a very serious effect on the level of sectarian killing going on.” The task force hoped that reopening the factories after three years of desertion would bring young men off the streets and help reduce violence.¹¹⁷

The Pentagon’s November report on Stability and Security in Iraq agreed, “High unemployment continued to feed sectarian, insurgents, and criminal activity.”¹¹⁸ For the first time, the report supported US-Iraqi initiatives to create jobs in a non-sectarian manner; “Efforts to address

unemployment and underemployment must be viewed as a top United States and Iraqi priority and be appropriately funded.”¹¹⁹

The DoD report did mention Iraqi efforts of economic reform, such as raising gas prices and passing the Fuel Import Liberalization Law and the Investment Law. The International Monetary Fund indicated that non-oil GDP growth would be 10% in 2006. On October 31, 2006 members of the International Compact finalized the compact and expected full approval. The compact had the potential to foster international investment in Iraq, but would most likely take several years to have a visible effect. However, “the Government of Iraq faces serious challenges in the economic sector and has made only incremental progress in economic reform and execution of its own budget and programs.”¹²⁰

Inflation – caused by “disruptions in the supply of food and fuel, price deregulation, spending by the Government of Iraq and donors, and growth of the money supply - was one of the key indicators preventing economic recovery in Iraq, said the DoD. According to Iraq's Organization for Statistics and Information Technology, the annual inflation from October 2005 to October 2006 was 53%. The report added, “It is widely believed that the official inflation rate underestimates the actual inflation rate.”

The central bank did take some steps to curb inflation:¹²¹

- The bank raised interest rates from 7% to 12%, but the weak banking sector and the significant influence of the dollar rendered this move largely symbolic.
- The bank also slowly appreciated the dinar. The exchange rate is now approximately 1,455 Iraqi dinar to US\$1. However, a much faster rate of appreciation will be necessary to fight inflation.

In December the Pentagon announced plans to reinvigorate Iraq's economy by creating jobs in many of the country's violence torn cities. The Pentagon team hoped to reestablish nearly 200 state owned factories that had closed down after the departure of the CPA. The businesses could potentially employ 11,000 Iraqis by the new year. The task force was also searching for US businesses to invest.

In mid-January the Pentagon looked into the option of restarting old Iraqi state-owned business during the Saddam era in order to create jobs and help the economy. For example, the *New York Times* reported that there was a ceramics factory near Ramadi virtually undamaged and with new equipment that could easily be restarted. The Iraqi government estimated that there were 192 state owned industries, outside of security and energy, which had been closed or neglected since 2003.

State owned enterprises were shunned by the Coalition Provincial Authority in hopes that free markets would fill the void. But the security crisis deterred most foreign investors and although cheaper goods from outside could be found in markets in Iraqi cities, unemployment averaged 40%. The idea had the backing of senior Pentagon official Paul Brinkley, but had not received official support.¹²²

In answers to advance policy questions before his nomination hearing with the Senate Armed Services Committee on January 23, 2007, Gen. David Petraeus expanded on the future of state owned industries:¹²³

When the Task Force to Improve Business and Stability Operations-Iraq (TF BSO) arrived in Iraq, it expected to find a Soviet style, aging State owned enterprise (SOE) industrial base that was grossly uncompetitive. First hand evaluations, however, reveal that some of these factories possess modern – even automated – equipment, and are capable of producing materials and manufactured goods that would be competitive in both Iraqi and world markets. Some facilities have deteriorated or suffered from a lack of recapitalization, and require varying amounts of refurbishment. Other SOEs are simply obsolete, either because they produce materials or finished goods for which there is little or no demand, or because they require cost-prohibitive investment prior to restarting operations. SOEs traditionally employ large numbers of Iraqis. Their closure still requires that the Government of Iraq address manpower costs, principally through retraining programs and job placement assistance. The TF is not advocating US investment in Iraqi factories, and is committed to the long term policy of economic privatization.

Beyond this, having helped Iraqi industries reestablish cement plants, small refineries, and asphalt plants, among others, while commanding the 101st Airborne Division, my view is that there are numerous industries that could be reestablished – ideally with Iraqi funds – and could be self-sustained, as they enjoy a comparative advantage in some factor of production (e.g. Iraq has vast sulfur reserves, reportedly the largest in the world, which would be used to refine high-grade sulfur for industrial purposes and production of fertilizer; Iraq also has large deposits of “sour crude” that are ideal of asphalt production). I strongly support encouraging such initiatives...

I strongly support the efforts of this task force. TF BSO is assessing Ministry of Industry and Minerals (MIM) SOEs as well as private factories. MIM is responsible for approximately 56 of the 190 or so SOEs nationwide. These 56 SOEs have approximately 200 factories. Within the 56 MIM SOEs, TF BSO has assessed 25 of these and is working closely with Deputy Prime Minister Salih and the MIM to revitalize the existing Iraqi industry base. Where competitive industry capacity exists, TF BSO and DoD will do everything they can to support the ministries, the factories, and provincial leadership to restart operations, re-employing as many current workers as circumstances permit. Several of the SOEs visited are in relatively good shape and can be restarted with minimal investment in power restoration. Initial efforts identified ten large factories, from Baghdad through Al Anbar Province, where \$6M provided by the Iraqi Government can restart operations and reemploy 11,000 workers. The products that these facilities generate will help to meet local and DoD demands, and have the potential to serve broader US and global markets.

The economic crisis did not stop some sources from downplaying the problem. *Newsweek*, for example, reported on the kind of hollow statistics show in Figure 4 to report on “Iraq’s booming economy.” For example, there were 7.1 million cell-phone subscribers in Iraq in 2006, compared to 1.4 million in 2004. It also reported 34,000 registered businesses in 2006 while the US Chamber of Commerce recorded only 8,000 in 2003. Inflation considered, basic goods became much more affordable after Saddam era tariffs were eliminated, and salaries went up 100%. Iraqis also purchased records numbers of cars; “Roadside bombs account for fewer backups than the sheer number of secondhand cars that have crowded onto the nation’s roads – five times as many in Baghdad as before the war.”¹²⁴ The value of the Iraqi dinar did steadily increased compared to the Iranian rial, the Kuwaiti dinar, and the US dollar.¹²⁵

Games with macroeconomic statistics, however, did not reflect the realities on the ground. The GDP did increase because of rises in oil prices and revenues, and vast amounts of wartime spending. On paper, this also increased GDP per capita. Conditions did improve in reality in the more secure Kurdish areas and some Sunni areas.

Most new business ventures, however, were as hollow as Iraq’s ghost forces and did nothing for the economy. Corruption, war time profiteering, combat damage, crime and sectarian and ethnic cleansing meant most Iraqis suffered far more than they gained and millions more lived in poverty and fear. Unemployment was a major factor driving recruiting for the militias and insurgents, while violence impoverished or exiled many of Iraqi’s best professionals.

At the local level, ethnic groups seized control of the economic space through intimidation of opposite sects and nationalists. In violent ethnically mixed cities, such as Baquba, Baghdad, and many other areas outside the Kurdish zone, businesses were closed and thus the unemployment crisis was so severe that many young men joined sectarian groups to provide their families with food and shelter.

Figure 4: Hollow, Meaningless Economic “Gains”: IMF GDP Estimates and Projections, 2004-2008

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Nominal GDP (in USD billion) | 25.7 | 34.5 | 47.0 | 61.0 | 71.0 |
| Government Oil Revenue | 69.6 | 69.4 | 66.9 | 66.5 | 67.4 |
| Per Capita GDP | 949.0 | 1,237.0 | 1,635.0 | 2,060.0 | 2,319.0 |
| Real GDP (% change) | 46.5 | 3.7 | 4.0 | 14.4 | 12.9 |
| Overall Fiscal Balance (in % of GDP) | -40.6 | 908 | -6.1 | -2.1 | -.8 |
| Consumer Price Inflation (annual %) | 32.0 | 32.0 | 30.0 | 17.0 | 10.0 |

Source: “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq,” Department of Defense, Quarterly Report to Congress, November 2006, p. 12

The Problem of Education

The fight for sectarian control of political and economic space had clearly entered the institution of education. Purging of academic moderates from Universities and sectarianism in schools all the way down the elementary school level promised to create sectarianism in future generations.

In mid January the Iraqi Ministry of Education stated that only 30% of elementary aged Iraqi school children attended school at that time, down from 75% at the same time in 2006. Almost 50% of Iraq's population was under 18, and the devastating effects of lack of education would be seen in generations to come.

An elementary school teacher in Baghdad said that she saw the general trend of Sunni children leaving schools faster than Shi'ite children. For example, when parents of Sunni children found out that Mahdi Army men were guarding the school, they immediately withdrew their children. School children also reported being harassed by teachers and classmates if they had a popular Sunni name and attended a Shi'ite school, and vice versa. Instead of attending school, many children accepted \$20 from insurgents to plant bombs; at the start of the war insurgents paid as much as \$1,000 for that job.¹²⁶

In an attempt to combat the brain drain in Iraq, top Iraqi intellectual and political figures began plans for an American University in Iraq. The University would be modeled after those in Cairo and Beirut and would recruit teachers from around the world. The plans already include a board of trustees, a business plan by international consulting firm McKinsey & Company, three candidates for university president, and \$25 million – mostly from Kurdish and American sources.

However, the university's site would be in the northeastern Kurdish province of Sulaimaniya. The odd location was primarily for security reasons, as intellectuals and students fled constant attacks in Baghdad. Planners believed that the location in Kurdistan would help attract more aid. The project's Kurdish founder, Barham Silah, said, "You really need to develop the political elite of the future, the educated elite of the future. The focus is also to stimulate reform in the Iraqi education system."

Yet many Arab education officials believe that placing the university in Kurdistan would create more tensions. If Kurdistan seceded from the Iraq and became an autonomous region it would be more difficult for Arab students to travel to Sulayamaniya. But the reality of Baghdad led some intellectuals to accept the location. Construction was planned to begin in the spring of 2007 with the first class starting in 2008. Degree programs would be those crucial to Iraq; business, petroleum engineering, and computer science.¹²⁷

The Problem of Healthcare

The fighting helped cause a health care crisis in Iraq that continued to have an adverse effect on the civilian population and contributed to the brain drain. The Health Ministry was infiltrated by Shi'ite militias – most with ties to the Mahdi Army – and was unable to provide care for victims of sectarian violence, let alone serious illnesses.

A doctor working in a Baghdad hospital said:¹²⁸

In my opinion, the health sector needs highly competent people. The Sadrists have no experience in this area and do not have an elite capable of leading such a ministry. The consequences are horrendous. Most doctors have left because of the behavior of the Sadrist clerics. They do not have any medical degree yet interfere in all aspects of our work, including medical diagnoses. Every hospital has its own mullah who gives order in the name of waliyat al-faqih [rule of the jurisprudent] or of who knows what else they come up with.

And an Iraqi journalist interviewed by Crisis Group in early December also agreed:¹²⁹

The Health Ministry is being purged on sectarian grounds. Sunnis are identified and killed, whether in hospitals or in the ministry itself. A few days ago, Ahmed Mohamed, a pharmacist, was killed by militiamen in the ministry parking lot. This was done under the eyes of Iraqi security forces responsible for the ministry's safety, yet infiltrated by militias.

Several sources indicated that the Health Minister was one of the officials that al-Maliki planned to replace in early 2007, but al-Sadr would still have the authority to nominate the candidates.

The Problem of Oil

The failure of the Iraqi government to adopt a petroleum law (promised by year end 2006) remained another major stumbling block to effective Iraqi government planning, developing a well-structured aid effort, and new investment, especially by the major oil companies, although smaller firms actively engaged in drilling in the north. Moreover, reports that Iraq set up a federal council for all and gas (chaired by the Prime Minister) to “endorse all oil deals with foreign investors and observe their implementation” raised still more questions about both aid and Iraqi revenue plans and capabilities. Regional distribution of oil revenues and control over new projects remained contentious issues, though definitions of what constitutes “new” oil vary based on who is doing the interpreting.

As for facilities, there were well over 300 incidents since the fall of Saddam, and president's “mission accomplished” announcement. These not only affected integrity of oil facilities but compounded Iraq's pipeline problems, some of which could not operate at their published rated throughput capacity for throughput serious consequences.

The Pentagon's August-November Stability and Security in Iraq Report described the problem of oil as follows:¹³⁰

The Coalition has worked to help the Government of Iraq restore oil facilities, increase production, improve refining, boost natural gas production, and maintain pipeline facilities. However, poor operational and maintenance practices, insurgent attacks, slow repair, and flawed procurement and contracting procedures have hampered progress and have precluded the Ministry of Oil from providing sufficient funds for operations and maintenance, needed rehabilitation projects, and new field development.

Oil exports failed to meet the goal of 1.7 million barrels per day and production fell short of 2.5 mbpd goal. The new goal for oil production in 2007 was dropped to 2.1 mbpd. As figure 5 shows, the week of January 8 – 14 saw average production at 1.72 mbpd, the lowest in some time.¹³¹

Moreover, the black market oil movements in country, especially for refined products, remained high – and profitable. Metering of oil shipments and exports was still incomplete at best and Iraq's the production and export figures are both suspect and variable.

According to Jerry Kiser, a US oil expert recruited by the Kurdistan Regional Government, Iran and Turkey were both actively looking to get involved in the Iraqi oil industry. Iran, he said, had

\$1 billion to invest and was looking for projects and companies to fund in Iraq. He also said that Iran received about 300,000 barrels of oil a day through smuggling in southern Iraq.¹³²

Encouraging news did come for the oil industry in mid January. An Iraqi cabinet-level committee completed a draft law governing Iraq's oil sector that would distribute all revenues through the federal government and grant the central government wide powers in exploration, development and awarding major international contracts.¹³³

The draft stated that all oil revenues should first go to the central government before being sent back to the regions in amounts proportional to population. It also provided for strong central government oversight and set up a Federal Oil and Gas Council to review the oil contracts. It did so even though Kurdish, and some Shiite, parties wanted to maintain regional control over the contracts, while Sunni Arabs favored giving the federal committee the power to approve contracts, rather than just review them and offer advice.

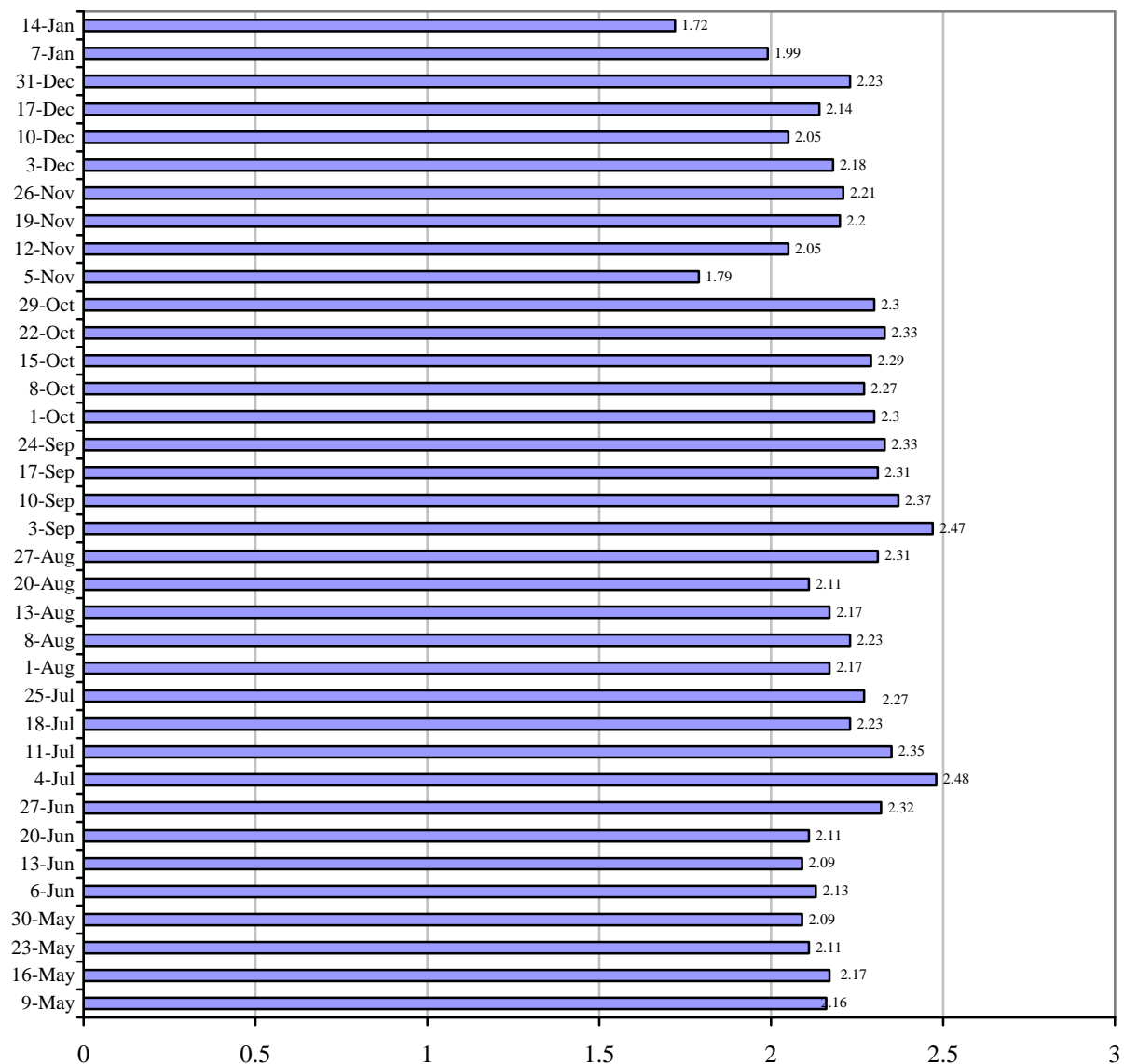
The council would pass judgment on each contract, even when it originated in a proposed deal between a company and one of the oil-producing regions. It would, however, make such decisions based on specific guidelines, like a directive to maximize profits for Iraq and to keep the contracting process transparent. There are other checks and balances: One example is that the regions can propose their own deals, but can only to work with companies "pre-qualified" in Baghdad.

The draft law also specified that technical experts in the Oil Ministry must participate in the process at all levels, and in developing "model contracts" to be used as templates at all levels of Iraq's oil industry. The Oil Ministry would develop plans for which oil fields would be developed and drilled first, and which ones would follow. The Federal Oil and Gas Council would either endorse that plan or send it back for revisions.

The draft law did, however, allow the regions to initiate the process of tendering contracts before sending them to Baghdad for approval. It also set up demanding criteria to govern the deliberations of the committee rather than simply relying on its independent discretion. Because the Kurds objected to the use of the word "approve" in describing the committee's duties, the draft law also gave the committee the power to review and reject contracts that did not meet the criteria.

The draft law altered the nature of Iraq's state-controlled oil industry by giving far more independence — possibly leading to eventual privatization — to the government companies that control oil exports, the maintenance of pipelines and the operation of oil platforms in the Gulf. It also revived the Iraqi National Oil Company, a countrywide umbrella organization that Saddam Hussein had sharply weakened. At the same time, the law allowed any region that produces at least 150,000 barrels of oil a day to create its own operating company.

The "bad" or uncertain news is that these reports were submitted to the Ministry for review and evaluation in later 2006, but no public results were available although serious damage was reported to have taken place in both the southern fields as well as Kirkuk. Moreover, GAO studies showed that the Oil Ministry spent only limited amounts of its \$3.5 billion capital budget in 2006 because of poor financial controls, and security problems caused by combat and crime.¹³⁴

Figure 5: Oil Production, Million of Barrels per day: May 2006- January 2007

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, August 2006, p. 21; November 2006, p.14 and "Iraq Weekly Status Report", US Department of State, available at: <http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rpt/iraqstatus/>

The Problem of Electricity

The fighting also prevented the reconstruction of the electricity sector and improving the distribution of power while demand surged. The August-November Stability and Security in Iraq report said that during the reporting period the average daily peak generating output was 4,650 MW – 78% of the Iraqi government's goal.

As Figures 6 and 7 show, Baghdad received on average considerably less electricity than the rest of the nation. In the week ending January 10, 2007 Baghdad only received an average of 3 hours of electricity. The level of daily electricity supplied varied over time, but showed little real increase since 2004. Electricity supplied was roughly 55% of national demand at the end of 2006 according to US estimates, and this was supply into the grid. In much of the country, fighting and theft meant that power lines were gone or never installed, and no one could begin to measure how much power actually reached the people.¹³⁵

Interdiction of lines in other parts of the country also caused spotty power. In addition, "Almost half of Iraqis reported supplementing government supplied electricity with private generators to fill the supply gap. The shortfall between government-supplied electricity and demand is aggravated by the absence of a rational fee-for-service tariff system that would encourage conservation and reduce the effects of corruption."¹³⁶

In the last six months of 2006, insurgents succeeded in their tactic of electrically isolating Baghdad, according to a *New York Times* report. Insurgents attacked towers in the deserts to the north and south of the capital, where they could easily kill repair crews. The attacks were particularly devastating because the towers brought almost all the power to Baghdad from the energy rich north and south. Looters also removed much of the valuable steel and aluminum from the towers and sold it on the black market – making repairs even more difficult.

Electricity officials said that in March 2006 only one or two lines were down, but by summer that number had risen to six or seven. The most devastating attack came on 6 July when insurgents targeted all the lines at the same time, and the government was unable to reverse the damage.

The typical insurgent strategy was to explode the four support joints on a single tower, which would bring down three others when it fell. On 17 December insurgents downed 40 towers running into Baghdad from the power plant in Beiji and 42 more connecting Beiji to Kirkuk.

The Iraqi electricity minister said, "Now Baghdad is almost isolated. We almost don't have any power coming from outside." He stated that seven of nine lines supplying Baghdad were down due to insurgent attacks and lack of repairs. He also could not think of any case in which the insurgents had been caught. The ministry had tried to make monetary arrangements with tribes in return for security of the lines, but they had all been ineffective.

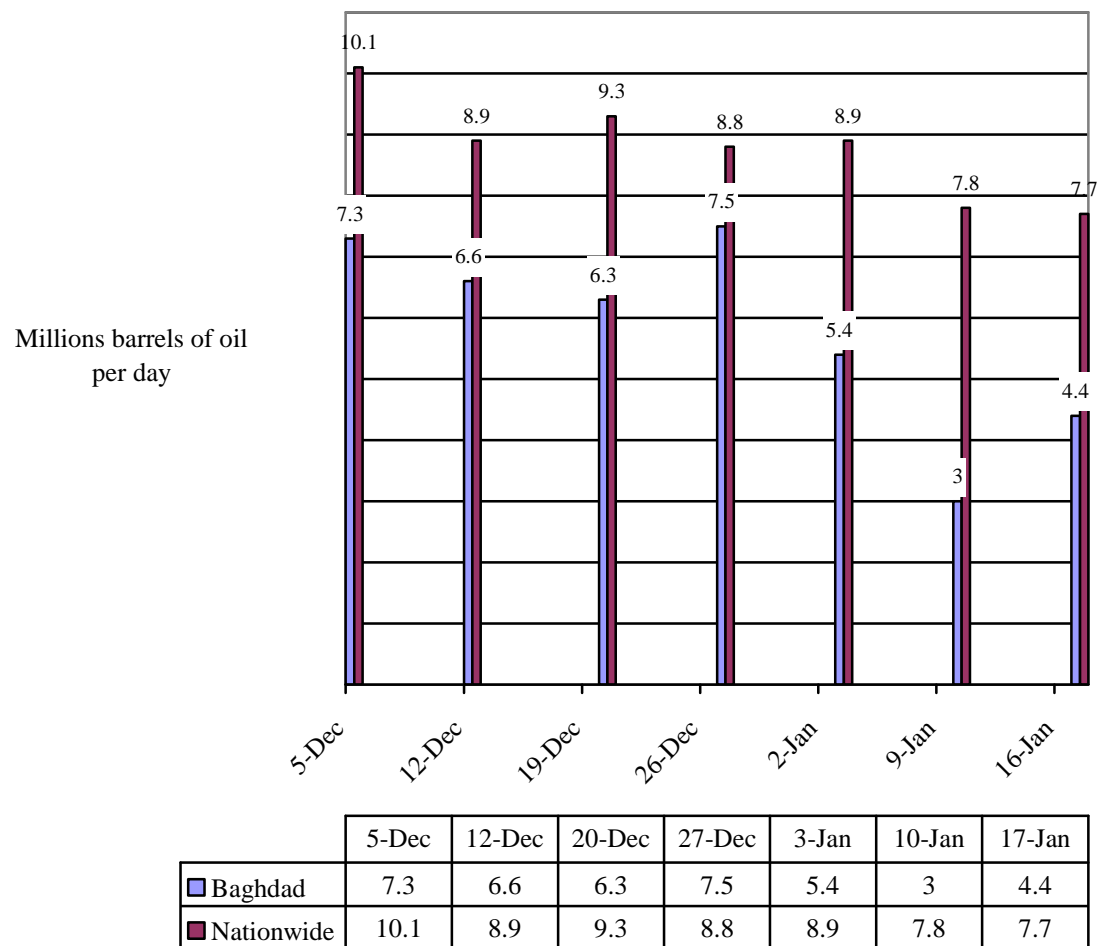
The electricity ministry devised a plan to bring into Baghdad 100 generators by the summer of 2007 as well as construction of new power lines. The plan would cost \$27 billion over ten years, but the supply of electricity would not meet demand until 2009, experts suggested. The ministry also planned to create a "centralized, automated control system to move electricity around what it now an antiquated grid run by engineers who manually throw switches at power stations and substations scattered around the country."¹³⁷

Figure 6: Average Daily Hours of Electrical Power per Province, October 2006

| | |
|--------------|-------|
| Anbar | >16 |
| Ninawa | 12-16 |
| Dahuk | >16 |
| Arbil | 12-16 |
| Tamim | 12-16 |
| Sulaymaniyah | 12-16 |
| Salah ad Din | >16 |
| Diyala | 9-11 |
| Baghdad | <8 |
| Karbala | 12-16 |
| Babil | 9-11 |
| Wasit | 9-11 |
| Najaf | 9-11 |
| Muthanna | 12-16 |
| Dhi Qar | >16 |
| Qadisiyah | 9-11 |
| Maysan | 12-16 |
| Basra | 12-16 |

Source: "Measuring Security and Stability in Iraq," Department of Defense, Quarterly Report to Congress, November 2006, p. 16.

Note: Hours of power measures generation, not transmission and distribution. Not all Iraqis received the amount of power indicated for their province on this chart.

Figure 7: Iraq Average Hours Electricity Received, December 2006-January 2007

Source: "Iraq Weekly Status Report," US Department of State, available at:
<http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rpt/iraqstatus/>

VII. The Dominant Role of Shi'ite Militias

In September, CENTCOM labeled the militias as the “largest contributors to sectarian violence in Iraq.”¹³⁸ By October, the US military stated that killings by the Mahdi army far outstripped killings by the Badr Brigades. Militia activity in late 2006 was characterized by the Mahdi Army growing rogue components outside of Moqtada al-Sadr's control. Officials estimated that 23 militias operated in Baghdad in the early fall and that most of them were Shi'ite. In mid-October Iraqi and US officials said that the number of militias in Baghdad was increasing and that they were “splintering into smaller, more radicalized cells.”

The August-November Stability and Security in Iraq update by the Department of Defense stated, “The most significant development in the Iraqi security environment was the growing role of Shi'a militants. It is likely that Shi'a militants were responsible for more civilian casualties than those associated with terrorist organization. Shi'a militants were the most significant threat to the Coalition presence in Baghdad and southern Iraq.”¹³⁹

The Crisis Group reported on the self-sufficiency of funding for Shi'ite militias in late 2006, and stated that reports of Iranian funding were exaggerated.¹⁴⁰

In Basra, for example, militias and tribes have divided up specific revenue-generating activities, such as those associated with port traffic or the oil industry; entrepreneurs involved in reconstruction efforts are systematically victims of extortion; and abductions have become a full-time occupation. In central Iraq, and chiefly Baghdad, anti-Sunni violence is a source of considerable funds. Militias regularly take possession of their victims' belongings or seek compensation from their families for the restitution of their bodies.

The extent of Iranian funding of militias in Iraq was, based on mainstream reporting, for the most part unclear. Yet the growth of the sectarian conflict in 2006 and growing support for Shi'ite militias among the population pointed largely to internal funding.

Internal Shi'ite Tensions

The Shi'ite community was increasingly divided along party and militia lines, although the individual parties had their own divisions by leader and many elements of the militias operated on their own or outside any clear central hierarchy controlled by the party leadership.

In late December 2006 the *Washington Post* reported on the growing power of the Mahdi Army over the Badr Brigade. In the Baghdad neighborhood of Karrada, the Badr Brigade was once the primary protector of the upscale Shi'ite residents. However, in the working class section the Mahdi Army was increasingly seen as the principal security force. When al-Hakim joined the government in 2005 and more recently in late 2006 traveled to Washington to talk with President Bush, many Shi'ites saw him as propping up the US led “occupation.” After a series of insurgent attacks and lack of a US timeline for withdrawal, many Shi'ites in Karrada switched their allegiance to the Mahdi Army.

Sadr's militia did not hold as much power and prestige as it did in other Shi'ite strongholds, such as Sadr City, but the power and credibility of SCIRI and the Badr Brigade was noticeably waning. In mosques where SCIRI leaders and Ayatollah Sistani's portraits hung, Moqtada al-Sadr's and his father's pictures joined them in 2006. Mahdi militiamen created “popular protection committees” to watch over blocks, just as they did in Sadr City. Older Shi'ites in Karrada still saw Ayatollah Sistani as the leader of Shi'ites and heeded his calls for calm, but the Mahdi Army had clearly grown in appeal to the younger generation of Shi'ites.¹⁴¹

A report by the Crisis Group stated that the unity between Shi'ite militias was strong in Baghdad, but in southern Iraq power disputes repeatedly turned violent. In Najaf the struggle between Shi'ite groups was over symbolic control of the holy city, but in Basra it was over the control of resources, primarily oil.¹⁴² It was, however, impossible to generalize about the nature and motivations of armed groups.

The two rival Shi'ite groups clashed again in late December in the southern city of Samawah in Shi'ite controlled Muthanna Province. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that police in Samawah, most of whom were loyal to SCIRI, were fighting a renegade branch of the Mahdi Army. The conflict started on December 1 when several Mahdi gunmen tried to break into a local prison and killed three people in the process. A ceasefire was signed, but fighting broke out against three weeks later. In the latter violence, nine people were killed, including four policemen and the Iraqi Army had to be called in to help.

The local police force blamed the violence on the renegade Mahdi militiamen, but a representative from Sadr's office in Muthanna said that police had opened fire on some Shi'ite worshipers loyal to Sadr. Sadr's office in Baghdad stated that the militiamen were led by rogue cleric Sheik Ghazi Zurgani and it appeared that Sadr was distancing himself from the Samawah militia. A spokesman for the Mahdi Army in Samawah said that the militiamen would not stop fighting until the local police released 30 detained militia members.

A member of the Samawah city council explained that local Shi'ites had gradually become divided by tribe and political affiliation; those who supported Sadr's bloc and those who supported SCIRI. The governor of Muthanna province, a SCIRI member, said that the situation was under control, although tensions would clearly erupt again in the future.

The incident underscored the divisions among the Shi'ite community and added another layer to the complex cycle of violence in Iraq. Although Iraqi security forces appeared to regain control of the situation, it was a setback for the first province to gain provincial authority. About 800 Australian soldiers remained in Muthanna to "keep an eye on the situation."¹⁴³

Sadr and the Mahdi Army

The Mahdi Army continued to be the principal militia accused of propagating sectarian violence by the both Iraqi and US governments. Moreover, both reported that Sadr had lost his ability to control many of the militiamen and thus chose to disassociate himself with as many rogue components as possible. The Mahdi Army successfully infiltrated Iraqi security forces, but Shi'ites continued to join the militia as opposed to security forces as the US and Iraq cracked down on militia components within the ISF. It is important to note that membership in Shi'ite militias in Baghdad, as well as loosely organized Sunni neighborhood gangs, continued to grow – in part - because Iraqis saw no other alternatives that could adequately provide for their safety.

Reprisal attacks and nightly executions by the Mahdi Army were only part of the story. The US intelligence community continued to observe that Sadr lost control of many elements of his militia and that different factions were engaged in soft sectarian cleansing. Mahdi militiamen used intimidation, threats, kidnapping, and corruption in their roles in government Ministries to push opposing sects out of contested areas. An example was the efforts by militiamen to expel Sunnis from the Hurriya neighborhood in Baghdad in late 2006. But this cleansing also occurred

against minorities in Basra, and the Mahdi army was actively engaged in a struggle to win political and economic support as far north as Mosul and Kirkuk.

As Sadr lost control of his militia, localized factions came to provide security for more and more Shi'ites throughout Iraq. The militia offered employment to young men, provided support to families who lost members to violence and offered reprisal, successively controlled key governmental ministries – which also in part funded the movement through corruption – and promised political power. These developments contributed to the large growth of membership in Sadr's movement and Shi'ite sectarian control of economic and political space in southern Iraq and much of Baghdad.

The August-November Department of Defense Stability and Security Report in Iraq said of the Mahdi Army:¹⁴⁴

The group that is currently having the greatest negative affect on the security situation in Iraq is Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM), which has replaced al-Qaeda in Iraq as the most dangerous accelerant of potentially self-sustaining sectarian violence in Iraq. JAM exerts significant influence in Baghdad and the southern provinces of Iraq and on the Government of Iraq. JAM receives logistical support from abroad, and most, but not all, elements of the organization take direction from Muqtada al-Sadr. JAM and Badr Organization members periodically attack one another and are political rivals.

On 21 December al-Sadr was reported to consider a plan to scale back militia activity in response to accusations that the Mahdi Army was fomenting the majority of sectarian violence.¹⁴⁵ Sadr's control of rogue elements of his militia, however, was doubtful at best and rather than a slowdown in violence, the last weeks of 2006 saw a spike in sectarian killings.

In response to President Bush's plan to send roughly 17,500 US troops to Baghdad, Abdul-Razzaq al-Nidawi, a senior official in al-Sadr's office in Najaf said, "We reject Bush's new strategy and we think it will fail."¹⁴⁶ Sadr's rejection of the plan raised the risk of a major battle between US led forces in Baghdad and the Mahdi Army, which could call upon some 60,000 fighters. At the same time, however, Sadr had other options.

On January 19 the US military reported that US and Iraqi forces captured a top aide to Sadr. Sadr's office immediately condemned the arrest, but said that the Madhi Army would not fight US forces during the holy month of Muharram, which began for Shi'ites on January 20.¹⁴⁷ Sadr could choose between resistance and simply waiting out the US effort while keeping his loyal elements intact. Tactical victories against the Mahdi Army meant little when the militia and its rogue components controlled economic and political space. Further, Sadr's pledge not to fight for a month was most likely another attempt to disassociate himself from the increasing number of rogue Mahdi Army components that no longer heeded his direction.

Intelligence leaders in the US agreed that al-Sadr did not appear to want to engage US led forces in Baghdad at that time. CIA director Michael V. Hayden told the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence on January 18, "And to the degree that [Sadr] controls Jaish al-Mahdi – and that's a very important factor – to the degree that he controls this, he's trying not to bait us or confront us into confrontation." Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency Lt. Gen. Michael D. Maples also said, "[Jaish al-Mahdi] will probably reduce their level of activity in the near term in order to see what's going to happen, how it's going to happen, particularly in Baghdad. And I think they will continue to operate in other parts of Iraq to further establish their influence over the Shia population."¹⁴⁸

Maples also warned that a US troop surge in Baghdad to tactically counter the Mahdi Army's dominance did not address the ability of localized cells – many not answering to Sadr – to gain control of economic and political space outside of the capital. In Kirkuk and Mosul, for example, there was evidence that the minority Shi'a residents relied on the Mahdi for protection and supported their presence.

On January 21 al-Sadr's 30 deputies and 6 cabinet ministers returned to the government and he stood down his militia. Sadr clearly had more to gain from rejoining the government and letting US led forces go after rogue members of the Mahdi Army that did not answer to him. His choice in the context of the Bush strategy in Baghdad had the potential to preserve his personal influence in Iraq as well as his loyalists in the militia. Further, by standing down his militia, he ensured that the US surge would focus its efforts on Sunni insurgents in the capital.¹⁴⁹

VIII. Changes in the Nature of the Sunni Insurgency

Al-Qa'ida in Iraq and the umbrella organization, the Mujahedeen Shura Council, sought to unite components of the Sunni insurgency in an apparent attempt to counteract the rise of organized Shi'ite militias. The al-Qa'ida in Iraq bombing of the Shi'ite Samarra mosque in February 2006 was only the most visible symbol of the trend toward sectarian conflict that began in 2004. As the trend became the norm in 2006, the fight of the insurgency gradually changed from one of tactical victories against US led forces to one against other sectarian groups for control of economic and political space. This evolution defined the "war after the war" and now involved all Iraqis, whose choice to support sectarian groups would ultimately determine the outcome.

The August-November Stability and Security Report by the Department of Defense discussed Sunni insurgents and armed groups:¹⁵⁰

- Sunni terrorist organizations, such as al-Qaeda in Iraq and Ansar al-Sunnah, are engaged in a religiously motivated conflict to end "foreign occupation" and to marginalize the Shi'a.
- High profile terrorist attacks are most often attributed to al-Qaeda in Iraq, whose goals include instigating sectarian violence. Al-Qaeda in Iraq and the affiliated Mujahadeen Shura Council consist of both foreigners and Iraqis motivated by an extremist Sunni Islamic ideology and seek to establish an Islamic Caliphate in Iraq. The emergence of Abu Ayub al-Masri as leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq demonstrated its flexibility and depth, as well as its reliance on non-Iraqis. Al-Masri benefited from detailed knowledge of former al-Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's planning as well as his own extensive operational experience, allowing him to carry forward many of his predecessor's existing strategies. Al-Masri has attempted to set the tone for the Iraqi jihad and to solidify the perception of continued strong leadership within al-Qaeda in Iraq. Since al-Masri assumed leadership, al-Qaeda in Iraq has continued its main strategy of instigating sectarian violence using high profile attacks against Shi'a civilians.
- Ansar al-Sunnah is a mostly indigenous terrorist group with similar goals. However, Ansar al-Sunnah objects to al-Qaeda in Iraq's indiscriminate targeting of Iraqis.
- The New Ba'ath Party, the 1920 Revolutionary Brigade, and Jaysh Muhammad are the most prominent Sunni Rejectionist groups. To date, Sunni Rejectionists – also known as the Sunni Resistance – have exhibited limited interest in Prime Minister Maliki's National Reconciliation and Dialogue Project. These groups attack Coalition and Iraqi forces to try and get Coalition forces to withdraw and to regain a privileged status in a Sunni dominated Iraq. Sunni Rejectionists target Coalition forces at higher rates than Shi'a militia groups do. Most of the Rejectionist insurgents will probably continue attacking Coalition forces as long as the Coalition remains in Iraq, and the Rejectionists are likely to increase attacks against Shi'a dominated ISF as they assume greater responsibility...
- Sunni Arabs do not have a formally organized, national level militia. Sunni, especially in heavily mixed areas like Baghdad, rely on neighborhood watches and other local armed elements to provide security in neighborhoods and areas where they perceive Iraqi institutions and forces are unwilling or unable to meet security requirements. Attacks on the Sunni population by Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM), and the presence of Badr Organization and JAM members in the Iraqi Police Service and the National Police, contribute to Sunni concerns about persecution. High levels of sectarian violence are driving some Sunni neighborhood watch organization in Baghdad to transform into militias with limited offensive capabilities.

A Crisis Group report also summarized the effect of such changes in a similar way:¹⁵¹

Having established a fertile haven in Iraq, jihadism has been metastasizing and spreading. Much as, at the outset, so-called Arab Afghans such as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi helped import jihadism to Iraq, insurgent skills, methods and discourse are now being developed in and exported out of Iraq. Suicide attacks or the use of more sophisticated improvised explosive devices are known to have made their way to Afghanistan. It is not so much that Iraq harbors insurgent training camps, although the armed opposition claims that to be the case. Rather, the war gave insurgents the opportunity to elaborate relatively sophisticated military

doctrines, more flexible, effective and capable of being adapted to other conflict zones. Actively engaged in propaganda and proselytisation, the armed groups have set up highly developed means of communication that are being duplicated elsewhere. Moreover, the various transnational networks once formed to bolster the jihadi insurgency in Iraq – involving the transfer of both funds and fighters – are now operating in reverse direction, presenting a serious threat to neighboring countries.

The Pentagon's November Report was the first DoD report that acknowledged the effect of Shi'ite militia infiltration into ISF on Sunnis. Although Sunni insurgents seen since 2003 – such as al-Qa'ida in Iraq and Ansar al-Sunna – still constituted the majority of attacks against Coalition forces at the end of 2006, the November DoD report showed how sectarian violence in Baghdad was forcing previously unaligned Sunnis to take up arms to protect their families and neighborhoods.

During 2006, al-Qa'ida in Iraq absorbed ten additional Sunni armed groups, according to a report published in the *New York Times*. These groups also joined the 'Islamic State of Iraq' – the eight province autonomous region declared by the al-Qa'ida dominated Mujahedeen Shura Council. Some of the groups that joined the Mujahedeen Shura Council and Islamic State in 2006 included the Society of True Believers, Supporters of Monotheism and Our Creed, the Knights of Monotheism, the Army of the Abrahamic Tradition, the Army of the Prophet's Companions, and the Army of the Conquerors, which broke from the Islamic Army in Iraq.

The report also noted the loose affiliations to the al-Qa'ida network of the Islamic Army in Iraq, the Mujahedeen Army, and the Ansar al-Sunna Army. In September, members from the Mujahedeen Shura Council and Ansar al-Sunna met, indicating that some level of coordination began taking place between the two groups. Al-Qa'ida in Iraq also announced that the 1920 Revolutionary Brigades – which previously avoided sectarian conflict – joined the Islamic State of Iraq.¹⁵²

These developments in the larger al-Qa'ida network in 2006 – most of which occurred after the death of al-Zarqawi – indicated that al-Qa'ida in Iraq sought to unify the insurgency. Attacks by those groups affiliated with the Mujahedeen Shura Council continued to target US troops, but also took on a distinctly sectarian element.

Increased alliance between insurgent groups seemed to strengthen the insurgency at the end of 2006 and into 2007. If Abu Ayub al-Masri – leader of al-Qa'ida in Iraq – and Abu Omar al-Baghdadi – emir of the Islamic State of Iraq – could successfully unite the vast number of insurgent groups 2007 would most likely see a rise in coordinated large-scale attacks typical of al-Qa'ida against coalition troops and Iraqi Shi'ites, but more importantly, widespread support from the Sunni community. Sunni insurgent leaders clearly saw a united effort as vital in retaliating against attacks by the largest Shi'ite militia, al-Sadr's Mahdi Army.

Evolving Tactics

Insurgents continued to use tactics that had worked well throughout the war: mass kidnappings, mass bombings, kidnappings of Iraqi professionals/government workers, targeting Iraqi security forces, and body dumps. At the same time they adapted their tactics to stay one step ahead of US-led forces. The urban warfare of Baghdad was a haven for snipers and hidden IEDs. It was these shifting tactics that US and Iraqi forces found so difficult to anticipate and prevent.

Such tactical battles with US or Shi'ite controlled security forces, however, were only a means to an end. The Sunni insurgents, like the armed groups from other sects, were fighting for control of

the population. Their goal was to gain control of political and economic space. The growth of the Muhahideen Shura Council, and more prolific support for an "Islamic State of Iraq", indicated that the insurgency recognized the importance of gaining the political and economic support of Sunni tribes across the country.

Anbar Province clearly maintained a Sunni majority, fueled in part by the mass arrival of Sunni refugees pushed out of Baghdad and southern Iraq by soft sectarian cleansing, but Baghdad, Kirkuk, Mosul, and large sections of Diyala Province were ethnically diverse and highly contested. The future success of the Sunni insurgency relied on its ability to gain the support of large numbers of Sunnis in these areas and to provide local security and economic incentives.

Al-Qa'ida's internet addresses steadily attacked all Sunni efforts at compromise and conciliation. Second in command of Al-Qa'ida al-Zawahiri said in a late December video address:¹⁵³

I tell Republicans and Democrats alike that you are frantically looking for a way out of the disasters surrounding you in Iraq and Afghanistan. You insist on the same stupid mentality. You try to negotiate with some parties in the hope that they might secure your departure, but these parties do not have an escape route to offer you, and your attempts will only generate more disappointment, God willing, because you are not negotiating with the real powers in the Islamic world. It seems you will endure a painful journey of failed negotiations, only to be forced to turn back and negotiate with the real powers.

In an internet video in late 2006 Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, the proclaimed emir of the Islamic State of Iraq created by al-Qa'ida allied forces in the fall, stated that 70% of tribal sheiks aligned themselves with the Islamic State. Baghdadi invited former members of the old Iraqi Army to join his forces to fight against the "occupation"; the call came only a week after Prime Minister Maliki invited ex-Ba'athist army members to join the new security forces. Any old army member under the rank of major was eligible if he could recite passages from the Koran and pass a test on Islamic law.

Baghdadi told Sunnis to continue opposing the rule in Baghdad and the government's attempts at reconciliation with Sunnis. The video clip also stated that governors had been appointed in Sunni dominated areas and that Islamic law was imposed at the "request of the people themselves." If Baghdadi's projections about the popularity of the Islamic State of Iraq were accurate, it appeared Sunni opposition groups and al-Qa'ida supporters were more closely aligned under the leadership of al-Masri than they had been under Zarqawi, and presented a new threat to US operations in Sunni dominated and contested areas.¹⁵⁴

The Propaganda War

A Crisis Group report in late December commented on insurgent use of propaganda as a tactic. The report said, "The armed opposition has focused its propaganda on crimes committed against Sunni Arabs, thereby encouraging a siege mentality and promoting its own role as protector of the oppressed population."¹⁵⁵

In early January *Newsweek* also reported on the success of the insurgency's propaganda war, as opposed to that waged by the US. A TV station, Zawra, became one of the most popular stations among Sunnis, even among some Shi'ites. Zawra regularly showed footage of attacks against US troops and encouraged Iraqis to attack occupation forces. Some US military officials believed that insurgents attacked troops in some cases just to get footage.

The internet, TV, and cell phones made it much easier for insurgents to disseminate their propaganda against coalition forces. Most large scale attacks were filmed by sophisticated

technology and insurgents edited the tapes to confirm hostile stereotypes about US forces. The US military response, however, stuck to traditional propaganda channels such as press releases, which were outdated and not viewed by many Iraqis.

The Sunni insurgents used Saddam Hussein's execution to try to rally Sunnis throughout the country and the Arab world. Insurgents sought to gather popular support to change the main street name in Falluja – where the US pledged millions for the 'hearts and minds' campaign – to the 'Martyr Saddam Hussein'.¹⁵⁶

On January 21 gunmen attacked the provincial governor's office in Karbala, south of Baghdad. The insurgents wore American military uniforms and flak jackets and had US military weapons and SUVs. Insurgents regularly acquired ISF uniforms and vehicles, but had never so effectively disguised themselves as US troops.¹⁵⁷

The War for Economic Space

As with Shi'ite militia tactics, the number of bombings or IED attacks by Sunni insurgents was only part of the larger and more important picture of control of political and economic space. The more unified insurgency and the "Islamic State" had the potential to gain the support of the broader Sunni community. Continued intimidation campaigns against Sunnis who complied with US forces or the Shi'ite government and a lack of employment opportunities also maintained the undrainable swamp of young Sunni recruits. Moderate Sunnis increasingly saw the Shi'ite led government as unwilling to compromise with Sunnis on any issues, and therefore were swayed to give their economic and political support to the insurgency.

The insurgents also tailored their economic attacks to encourage the conditions for civil war. In the last six months of 2006, insurgents succeeded in their tactic of electrically isolating Baghdad, according to a *New York Times* report. Insurgents attacked towers in the deserts to the north and south of the capital, where they could easily kill repair crews. The attacks were particularly devastating because they brought almost all the power to Baghdad from the energy rich north and south. Looters also removed much of the valuable steel and aluminum from the towers and sold it on the black market – making repairs even more difficult.

Electricity officials said that in March 2006 only one or two lines were down, but by summer that number had risen to six or seven. The most devastating attack came on 6 July when insurgents targeted all the lines at the same time, and the government was unable to reverse the damage.

The typical insurgent strategy was to explode the four support joints on a single down, which would bring down three others when it fell. On 17 December insurgents downed 40 towers running into Baghdad from the power plant in Beiji and 42 more connecting Beiji to Kirkuk.

The Iraqi electricity minister said, "Now Baghdad is almost isolated. We almost don't have any power coming from outside." He stated that seven of nine lines supplying Baghdad were down due to insurgent attacks and lack of repairs. He also could not think of any cause in which the insurgents had been caught. The ministry had tried to make monetary arrangements with tribes in return for security of the lines, but they had all been ineffective.

The Role of Foreign Volunteers

A tribal Sheik and a member of the group coordinating with US forces to defeat al-Qa'ida said that his "forces" had significantly reduced the number of weapons and foreign fighters in Anbar, but that there were thousands of al-Qa'ida fighters left in Anbar alone. He said that al-Qa'ida was responsible for 30% to 40% of the insurgency in Iraq. He believed that many al-Qa'ida fighters and weapons came from the neighboring countries of Syria and Saudi Arabia.¹⁵⁸

On January 6 US and Iraqi forces arrested five Sudanese fighters on Haifa Street in Baghdad the day after 27 bodies were dumped on the street. Three days later, Iraqi and US forces again came under attack from militants on Haifa Street and after a firefight arrested eleven people, including seven Syrians.¹⁵⁹

IX. The Kurdish Dimension: Dangerously Overlooked

The Kurds played an increasingly important role in the future of Iraq. The key issues for the Kurds were separating the country into autonomous regions, control over oil resources, the issue of Kirkuk, and relations with Turkey. The Kurds continued to remind Iraq's national government that they were cooperating and participating in the reconciliation dialogue on a voluntary basis only.

The Kurds won a major political victory with the passing of the national segregation bill in Parliament in early October that allowed governorates to join together and form autonomous regions in 2008. It provided a degree of greater autonomy that could give the Kurds a far more control over oil in the northern region, which was expected to have untapped reserves. Greater Kurdish autonomy, however, was monitored closely by neighboring Turkey. Turkey reiterated the need to curtail the rebel activities of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) and pledged protection to the minority Turcoman population in Iraq, especially Kirkuk.

The struggle for Kirkuk remained important and unresolved at the start of 2007. A surge of violence at the turn of the new year foreshadowed the fighting that could occur if a referendum took place as planned in November 2007. Shi'ite militia and Sunni insurgent attacks on Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) offices increased, as did the number of Kurdish refugees seeking to claim territory in the city.

The Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) maintained that the referendum would proceed as planned. However, on January 14, 2007 a group of Sunni and Shi'ite Arabs, Turkmen, and Christian Iraqis attended a conference in Ankara, Turkey to reject the incorporation of Kirkuk into Kurdistan.

This unity, however, was not visible in Kirkuk. Sadr's Mahdi Army used threats and intimidation against Sunnis and Kurds as well as Kirkuk's minority Shi'ite population, to keep them from leaving. The Peshmerga was also accused of illegally holding Sunni and Shi'ite Arabs and Turcomens in prisons.

The fight in Kirkuk, as in other cities, was for control of political and economic space. The number of groups involved, including Turkey, and the upcoming census in July 2007 and referendum in November 2007 made Kirkuk a particularly important space to control. In the latter half of 2007 the number of attacks by each militia would be irrelevant, but what would be important was how much political and economic support they could acquire; tactical victories meant little when it came time for the referendum on inclusion into the Kurdish area of "Kurdistan".

The Kurdish region continued to rely principally on the Peshmerga – much of which was incorporated in the Iraqi security forces - for security. The August-November DoD Stability and Security in Iraq Report to Congress said of the Peshmerga:¹⁶⁰

The Peshmerga is a security organization that operates as a regional guard force described in Article 121 of the Iraqi Constitution. It maintains security independently within and along Iraq's borders for the Kurdistan Regional Government. Private security companies have hired individual Peshmerga members for work outside the Kurdish area. Some members of the Peshmerga have been integrated into the Iraqi Army; there are allegations that these former Peshmerga members remain loyal to Kurdish authorities rather than to their proper Iraqi chain of command. Although the Peshmerga does not attack Coalition or Iraqi forces, and

in some cases provides security for reconstruction efforts, the perceived dual allegiance of the Peshmerga undermines effective national security and governance.

On December 26, the *New York Times* reported that hundred of prisoners, some innocent, were being held in Kurdish prisons in poor conditions and without legal rights. The Minister and Director of Office of Foreign Relations, Falah Mustafa Bakir, of the Kurdistan Regional Government wrote a letter to the Times strongly disavowing the article. He said that anyone held in Kurdistan prisons “have known affiliations with Al Qaeda, Ansar al-Islam and other groups committed to killing Americans, Kurds and Iraqis. The rule of law is what guides our treatment of prisoners, whatever their crimes.”¹⁶¹

However, the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq November – December Human Rights Report said:¹⁶²

Human rights violations are reportedly committed by security forces at detention centers. In many cases the arrest and detention of people is carried out by Kurdish militias. Detainees are often transferred directly to the Kurdistan Region without notifying the governorate or the police. Officials in Kirkuk are aware of such practices, yet no significant effort has been made to stop them...

The Problem of Resources

The Kurdish issue cannot be separated from the oil issue. Although they may have large untapped oil reserves, Kurds were forced to illegally import oil from Iran. The legal gas stations in Kurdistan did little business as most Kurds received their fuel from side-of-the-road illegal operations. One teenage boy who ran such a service said that he did not make much money because he was forced to import smuggle expensive oil from Iran; the Iraqi oil was too low grade.

The KRG called in experts, such as Jerry Kiser from Kansas, to help them realize the full potential of their oil reserves. Whether the profit would be Kurdish or national remained a contested issue at the start of 2007, but the oil must first be tapped and refined; much of the oil that Iraq did pump had to be sent to refineries abroad and re-imported.

Kiser said that he tried to recruit foreign companies to come to Kirkuk and excavate, but most feared the violence destroying the rest of the country. He said, “Lots of people come to meet the minister but nobody is really doing anything.” Only two small foreign companies worked in Kurdistan at the time. Foreign companies were particularly wary of oil-rich Kirkuk where sectarian tensions were high and pipelines were attacked regularly, costing millions of dollars to repair.¹⁶³

The control of resources by the various groups involved in sectarian fighting became increasingly important as control of political and economic space was crucial to achieving success in the “war after the war”.

The Turkish Question

In early January 2007 Prime Minister Erdogan of Turkey again accused the US and Iraq of failing to curb rebel PKK activity in northern Iraq. Erdogan said the mission led by US envoy Joseph W. Ralston, appointed in August to coordinate efforts against the PKK, made little if any progress. “We were to make joint efforts against the terrorist organization with the United States

and Iraq. This has not materialized,” he said. He added, “Is this a tactic to distract us? We want concrete results.”

Erdogan argued that the US had promised to close PKK offices and to stop the flow of cash to rebels, but neither initiative took place. He also believed that US made bombs and weapons were being used by the PKK within Turkey. Turkey said it would give the US until late February or March 2007 to take action, but after that Ankara would be forced to take its own initiative against PKK activity.¹⁶⁴

Erdogan also reiterated that Turkey was ready and willing to help Iraq get back on its feet. He called stability in Iraq a more important foreign policy issue for Turkey at the beginning of 2007 than accession into the European Union. He said that Turkey was assessing what contributions could be made to help end the civil war status quo in Iraq.¹⁶⁵

President Bush said in his January 10 speech on strategy in Iraq, “We will work with the governments of Turkey and Iraq to help them resolve problems along their border.” The ‘problems’ were an apparent reference to the movement of PKK rebels from Iraq into Turkey. The President seemed to indicate that the US would not deal with Turkey directly on the issue, but rather help foster discussion between Iraq and Turkey.¹⁶⁶

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the following day at her testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee:

On Iraq, in particular, our regional diplomacy has several components. One concerns Iraq’s neighbor to the north: Turkey. President Bush and I have engaged retired General Joe Ralston to work with Iraq and Turkey on concerns about terrorism from the Kurdish Worker’s Party. Those efforts have helped to ease tensions, but we will do more to protect our ally, Turkey, from terrorist attacks.

X. Looking at the Numbers: Overall Attack Patterns and Levels of Violence

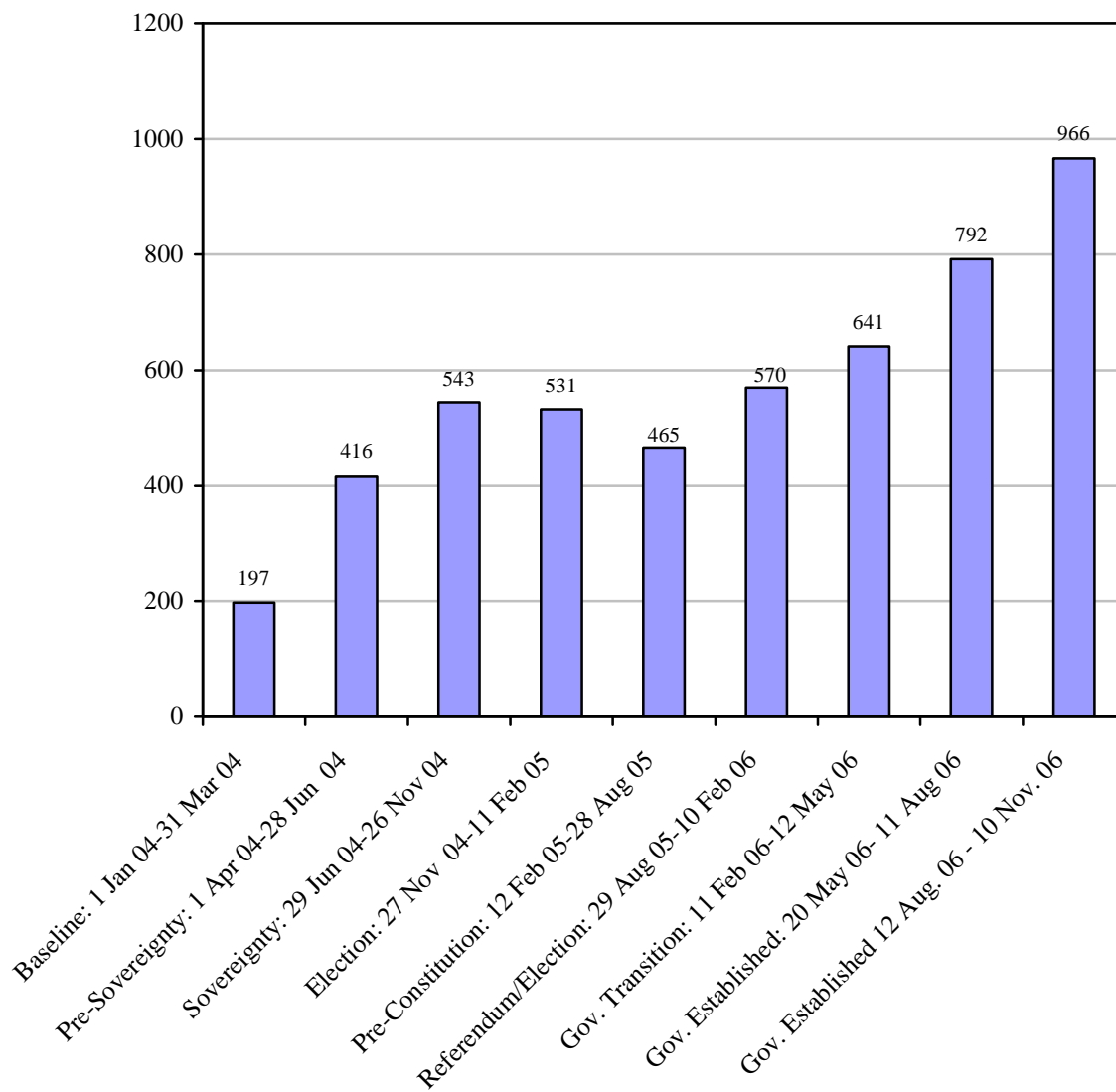
The gross patterns in violence are shown in Figures 8, 9, 10, and 11. The Department of Defense Stability and Security Report for August-November stated that attacks rose 22% from the previous reporting period, making for an average of 960 attacks a week. Overall, 55% of all attacks occurred in Baghdad and Anbar Provinces. Further, "violence in Iraq was divided along ethnic, religious, and tribal lines, and political factions within these groups, and was often localized to specific communities."¹⁶⁷

According to the DoD report, "Attack levels – both overall and in all specific measurable categories – were the highest on record during this reporting period, due in part to what has become an annual cycle of increased violence during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan."¹⁶⁸ The weeks following the end of Ramadan saw a 41% decline in sectarian killings, according to Maj. Gen. William Caldwell, MNF-I spokesman.¹⁶⁹

Caldwell said in December 27 press briefing, "Significant challenges do remain, and violence is likely to remain at unacceptably high levels in the very near term, but Iraqi forces are making progress to provide their own security and the Iraqi people are demonstrating great resolve to defeat these terrorists and criminals plaguing Iraq."¹⁷⁰

Killing and casualties were only part of the story, and the map of sectarian and ethnic violence was far broader than the major incidents of violence reported by the MNF-I and Iraqi government. There was no accurate data of such dead and wounded because they cannot be counted with any reliability even in the Baghdad area.

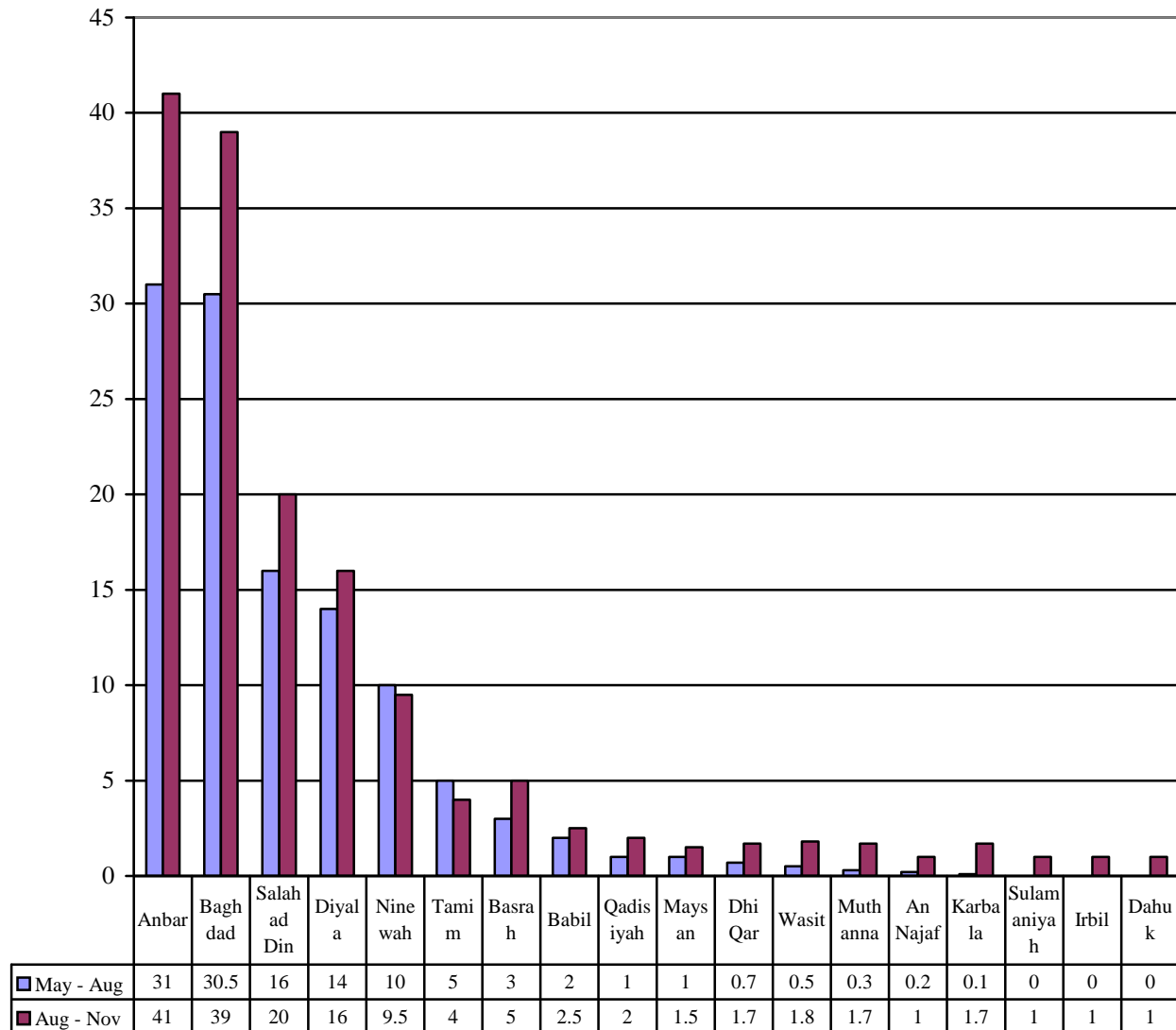
Various forms of "cleansing" became as important as major overt acts of violence as given sides attempted to dominate the other or push them out of areas where they had the majority or had superior power. These forms of "soft" ethnic cleansing included threats, physical intimidation, blackmail, seizure of property, raids on homes and businesses, use of checkpoints to push other factions out, kidnappings and extortion, misuse of government offices and police, and disappearances.

Figure 8: Average Weekly Attacks by Time Period: January 2004 – November 2006

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, October 13, 2005; And subsequent updates: February, 2006, p.27; May 2006, p.32; August 2006, p.33; November 2006, p. 22.

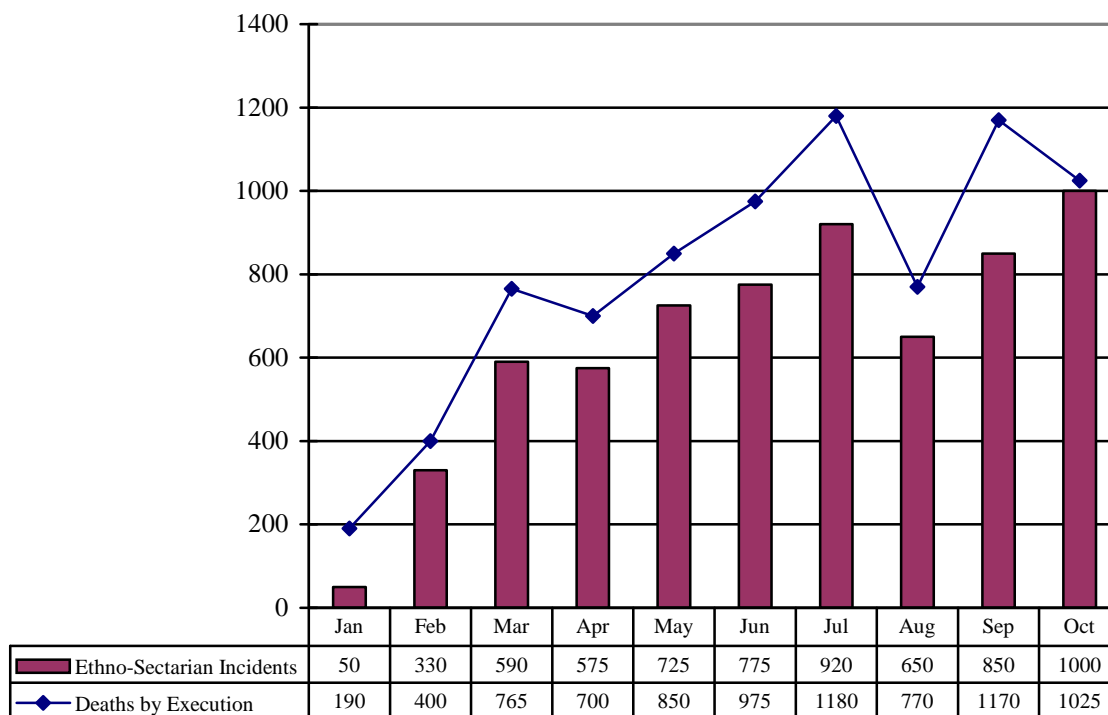
Data points are estimates from figure included in the DoD reports.

Note: The May, August, and November 2006 documents did not include a "Baseline" period.

Figure 9: Total Average Attacks by Province: May-November 2006

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, August 2006, p.32. and "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense Report to Congress, November 2006, p. 21.

Data points are estimates from figure included in the DoD report.

Figure 10: Ethno-Sectarian Incidents and Executions, January – October 2006

Source: “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq,” Department of Defense, Quarterly Report to Congress, November 2006, p. 24

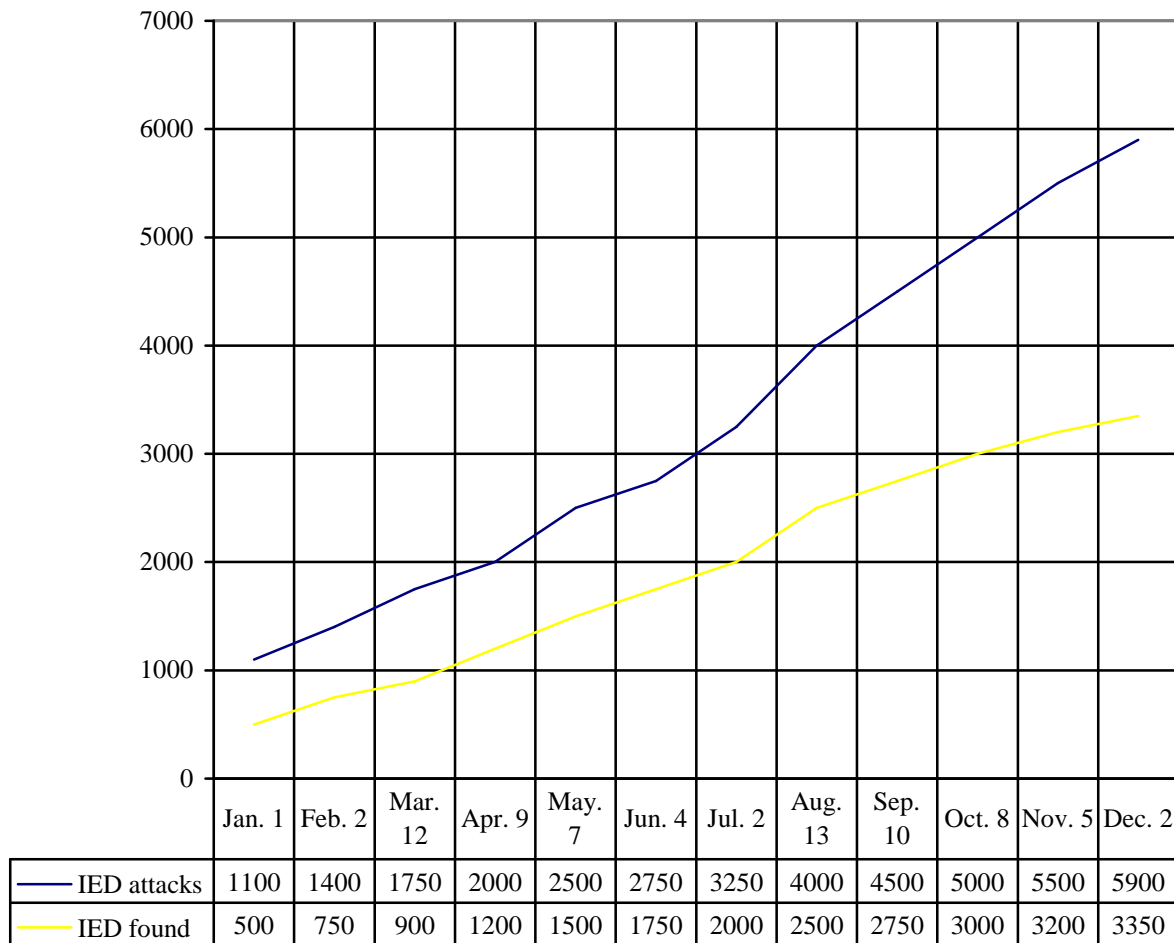
Note: Data points are estimates from material adapted from the DoD report.

Note: Ethno-sectarian incidents and execution recorded in MNC-I Significant Activities Database. Ethno-sectarian incidents are threats and violence with apparent sectarian motivations. Multiple casualties can result for a single incident. Ethno-sectarian executions are murders with distinct characteristics, and are a subset of total civilian casualties.

Figure 11: Average Significant Attacks in Major Iraqi Cities September 2005-November 2006



Source: Material adapted from information provided Hans Fah, a security and intelligence consultant working in support of private sector reconstruction programs in Iraq. Data has been drawn from both open source and on the ground protective security networks. Personal correspondence of the author, December 13, 2006. Used with permission.

Figure 12: Cumulative Summary of IED attacks and IEDs found in Baghdad, 2006

Source: Material adapted from information provided by Hans Fah, a security and intelligence consultant working in support of private sector reconstruction programs in Iraq. Data has been drawn from both open source and on the ground protective security networks. Personal correspondence of the author, December 13, 2006. Used with permission.

Bombings

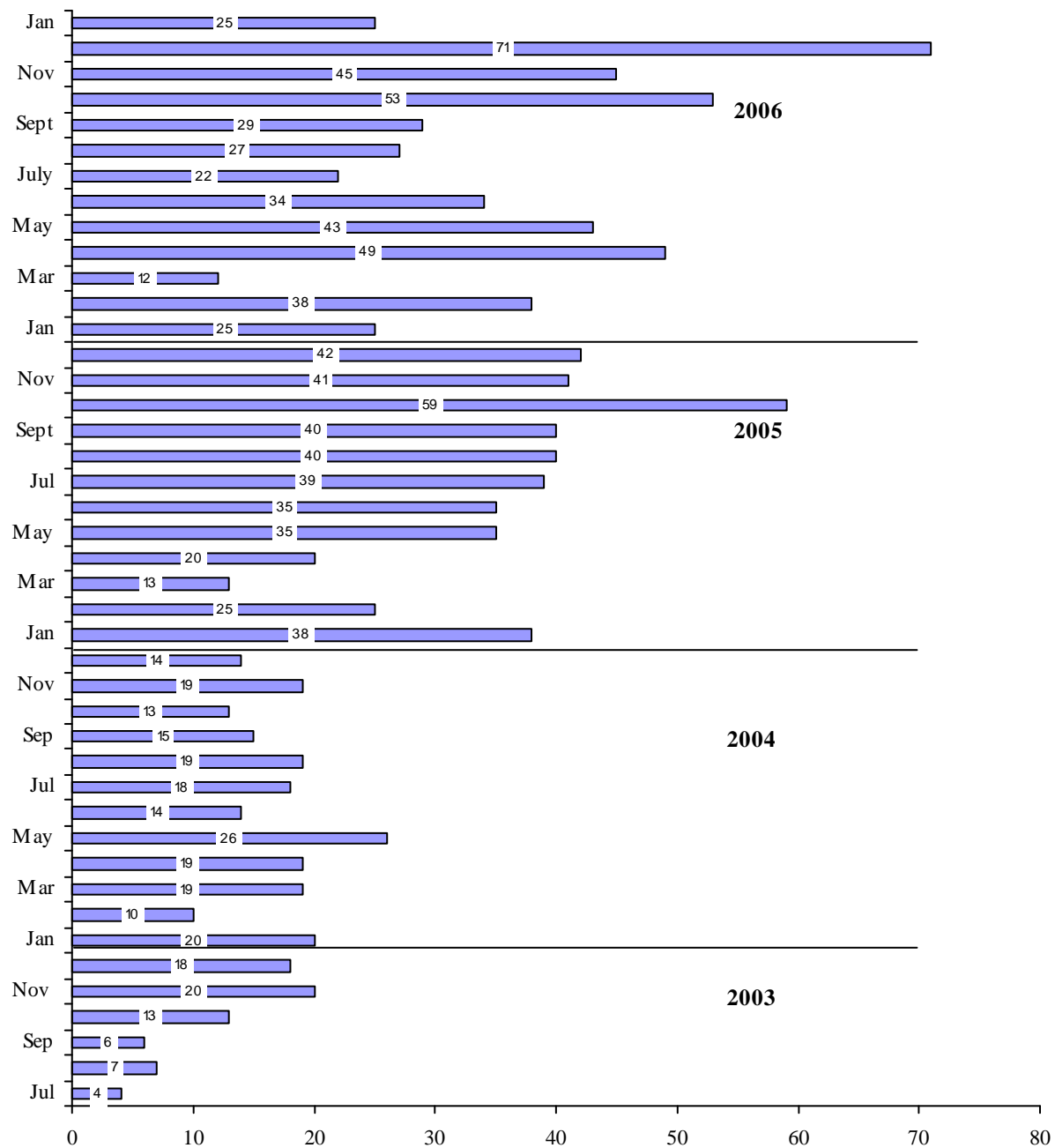
Suicide bombers, IEDs, and car bombs all took a heavy toll on Iraqi civilians and US forces in the winter of 2006-2007. US forces said they saw an increase in anti-tank mines, which were harder to detect and avoid. 1st Sgt. Michael Clemens stated, "We used to be pretty good about finding IED tripwires and such. But since they started using anti-tank mines, that hasn't worked so well."¹⁷¹ This is clearly reflected in the casualty patterns shown in Figure 13. The Pentagon also launched an initiative to develop radio systems immune to jamming signals used by troops against enemy IEDs.¹⁷²

The following bombing attacks show the scale of violence throughout Iraq, and particularly in Baghdad:

- December 18: A roadside bomb killed a person and wounded another in the town of Hawija. A bomb planted in a car carrying Electricity Ministry officials killed the driver and wounded two in eastern Baghdad. A roadside bomb targeting a police patrol wounded three policemen near the Technology University in central Baghdad. A roadside bomb wounded seven people when it exploded in a wholesale vegetable market in the southern Doura district of Baghdad. A roadside bomb targeting a police patrol wounded two policemen on the main road between Tuz Khurmatu and Kirkuk. A car bomb at the entrance of a wholesale vegetable market killed five people and wounded 19 in the southern Saidiya district of Baghdad.
- December 20: A suicide car bomber rammed his vehicle into a police checkpoint near Baghdad University in the southwestern Jadriya district, killing 11 people and wounding 31, including some students. A car bomb in the parking lot of an Interior Ministry office charged with issuing identity cards killed four people and wounded eight in Adhamiya district in northern Baghdad. A suicide car bomber rammed his car into an Iraqi army checkpoint, killing one soldier and wounding four in a town near Kirkuk. Six people died in central Baghdad when a car bomb exploded near a bus filled with people on the way to the airport.
- December 21: Two policemen were wounded when a roadside bomb exploded near the convoy of police Colonel Adnan Mohammed. A suicide car bomb killed two people and wounded two others in Amil district in southwestern Baghdad. A roadside bomb targeting a U.S. military patrol wounded two civilians in Mosul. A roadside bomb targeting a US military patrol wounded a civilian in Adhamiya district in northern Baghdad. A suicide bomber wearing an explosive vest killed 15 people and wounded 15 more when he blew himself up at a police recruitment centre in eastern Baghdad, the US military and police sources said. Three police officers and 12 recruits were killed.
- December 25: Two US soldiers were killed and one wounded in a roadside bomb attack southwest of Baghdad, the military said. Another roadside bomb in the same area killed one U.S. soldier and wounded two. A suicide bomber targeting a police checkpoint near the main entrance of Anbar University killed three policemen and wounded two students in the city of Ramadi. The U.S. military said one student and one policeman were killed, and five police wounded. A suicide bomber killed three people and wounded 20 others when he blew himself up aboard a crowded bus in the Shi'ite Talibiya district in northeastern Baghdad. A car bomb killed at least 10 people and wounded 15 when it exploded on a busy commercial street in the mainly Shi'ite New Baghdad district of the Iraqi capital.
- December 26: A roadside bomb targeting a police patrol wounded four civilians in Mosul. 40 bodies were found in Baghdad. A roadside bomb killed a child and an elderly man and wounded three university students in Kirkuk. A car bomb near a police station wounded a policeman and four civilians in the oil refining city of Baiji. Three roadside bombs in quick succession killed a police lieutenant colonel and wounded nine people in central Baghdad. A roadside bomb killed five people and wounded 15 others in a crowded area in central Baghdad. Three simultaneous car bombs exploded in southwestern Baghdad, killing 16 people and wounding 70. A car bomb in the mainly Sunni Arab district of Adhamiya in Baghdad killed 15 people and wounded 30. Three U.S. soldiers looking for roadside bombs were killed northwest of Baghdad, the U.S. military said. One soldier was wounded.

- December 27: A roadside bomb targeting an Iraqi army patrol killed three soldiers in the town of Suwayra. A roadside bomb targeting a police patrol wounded five people, three policemen and two civilians, in Camp Sara district in eastern Baghdad. A car bomb killed eight people and wounded 10 in Talbiya.
- December 28: A suicide bomber in a minibus attacked the offices of the Kurdistan Democratic Party in the northern city of Mosul, witnesses said. Police said two people were killed and 19 wounded in the blast. A car bomb exploded at a petrol station near the Shaab stadium in central Baghdad, killing 10 people and wounding 25. Two roadside bombs exploded in Bab al-Sharji in central Baghdad, killing seven people and wounding 35. A roadside bomb targeting an Iraqi police patrol wounded three policemen in Hawija.
- December 29: A roadside bomb killed one U.S. soldier and wounded two others when it hit their patrol in northwest Baghdad. A roadside bomb killed one U.S. soldier and wounded three more in southwest Baghdad.
- December 30: A car bomb in the southern Baghdad neighborhood of Saidiya killed one person and wounded four, including two policemen. A suicide bomber with explosives strapped to his body killed five people and wounded eight, including four policemen, in Tal Afar. A car bomb killed two people and wounded eight in Baghdad's western Mansour neighborhood. Three car bombs exploded in quick succession in the mainly Shi'ite neighbourhood of Hurriya in Baghdad, killing 36 people and wounding 77.
- December 31: Two U.S. soldiers were killed and two more wounded in an explosion in Iraq's Diyala province. A car bomb near a Sunni mosque killed two people and wounded eight on Saturday in al-Dhubat street in Adhamiya district in northern Baghdad. A car bomb killed one person and wounded six others in Hurriya. A car bomb killed one person and wounded four others in central Baghdad.
- January 4: A roadside bomb targeting a police check point killed an Iraqi soldier and wounded four in the town of Iskandariya. Two car bombs near a petrol station killed 13 people and wounded 22 others in Baghdad's western upscale Mansour district, an Interior Ministry source said. Police said it was a roadside bomb followed by a car bomb.
- January 5, 2007: A roadside bomb targeting a police patrol wounded two policemen, including a major who was in serious condition, in Kirkuk. A roadside bomb detonated near an Iraqi army patrol, killing a captain and wounding four soldiers in the oil refinery city of Baiji.
- January 6, 2007: The chief of Baghdad police, Major General Ali Yasser, survived a car bomb attack on his motorcade in Baghdad, police sources said. A British soldier was wounded when his convoy was hit by a roadside bomb but his injuries were not thought to be life threatening, Major Charlie Burbridge said. Two people were killed and four wounded by a car bomb in Doura in southern Baghdad.
- January 7, 2007: A roadside bomb killed two people and wounded two in central Baghdad. The bodies of two people were found shot dead in the outskirts of Mosul. A car bomb in a market in the town of Hilla, killing two people and wounded 11. Habib al-Shimiri, a senior Education Ministry official, survived a roadside bomb attack on his car near the al-Shaab football stadium in east central Baghdad, but two of his guards were killed, police said. Three US airmen working for a bomb disposal team were killed by a car bomb in Baghdad, the US military said, and that one more airman was wounded in the blast.
- January 8, 2007: A roadside bomb targeting a police patrol killed a policeman and wounded two, including a civilian, police said. A roadside bomb exploded near a bus carrying pilgrims and wounded three of them in southeastern Baghdad, police said. A bomb planted under a car killed two people and wounded two others in the southern Zaafaraniya district of Baghdad. Two civilians were killed and five wounded when a roadside bomb targeted a convoy of official vehicles in southeastern Baghdad. A suicide truck bomber killed two policemen and wounded three more at a checkpoint in Ramadi.
- January 10, 2007: A car bomb exploded near a petrol station in Mahmudiya, killing one person and wounding three others, police said. A suicide car bomber targeting a police patrol killed a child and wounded three policemen and one civilian near Tal Afar. A suicide bomber blew himself up in a busy market also in Tal Afar.

- January 25, 2007: A suicide car bomber blew himself up near an Iraqi army check point, killing four soldiers and wounding three others in Jamiaa district in western Baghdad, police said. A suicide car bomber killed at least five people and wounded 28 more in an attack on an office of the Kurdistan Democratic Party.
- January 16, 2007: A roadside bomb followed by a second blast from a motorcycle rigged with explosives killed 15 people and wounded 70 more near a Sunni mosque in central Baghdad. Gunmen shot dead one person in the town of Hawija. A police colonel survived a roadside bomb that exploded near his car, killing one civilian and wounding four, including two policemen, in Kirkuk. A car bomb exploded near al-Mustansiriya University in eastern Baghdad, killing 60 people and wounding 140.
- January 17, 2007: A suicide truck bomber blew himself up near a police headquarters in Kirkuk, northern Iraq, killing 10 people and wounding 42 others. A car bomb at a market in the Baghdad Shi'ite stronghold of Sadr City killed at least 15 people and wounded 33.
- January 18, 2007: A car bomb killed three people and wounded seven others in eastern Baghdad. A car bomb targeting a police patrol killed four people and wounded 10 others in Saadoun Street in central Baghdad. Three car bombs exploded in quick succession in a vegetable market, killed 10 people and wounded 30 others in the southern Doura district of Baghdad.
- January 21, 2007: A bomb killed at least six people and wounded 15 when it destroyed a minibus in Karrada, in central Baghdad, police said. A car bomb near Beirut Square in eastern Baghdad killed one civilian and wounded five. A roadside bomb killed a British soldier and wounded four north of Basra in southern Iraq, the British military said. A car bomb targeting an Iraqi army patrol killed a woman and wounded four people, including two soldiers, in Mosul.
- January 22, 2007: At least 88 people were killed and 170 wounded when two car bombs exploded simultaneously at a second-hand goods market in Bab al-Sharji, a busy commercial area in central Baghdad. A roadside bomb aimed at a police patrol killed three policemen and wounded nine people, including two policemen, in Tal Afar. At least 14 people were killed and 40 wounded when a bomb exploded in a market near Baquba.
- January 23, 2007: A suicide car bomber rammed his car into the Kurdistan Youth Centre in Mosul and wounded nine people, seven civilians and two guards. A car bomb targeting an Iraqi army patrol wounded three Iraqi soldiers near the town of Sinjar, northwest of Mosul. A roadside bomb exploded near a minibus carrying workers in the Northern Oil Company while they heading to Baiji.

Figure 13: US IED Deaths July 2003- January 2007

Source: Adapted from material provided by Iraq Coalition Casualties, data as of January 24, 2007, available at: <http://icasualties.org/oif/IED.aspx>.

“Body Dumps”

Body dumping increasingly was used to intimidate and support efforts at sectarian and ethnic cleansing. Hundreds of bodies were found on the streets of cities in Iraq. This chronology represents only a fraction of the bodies dumped; there was no accurate and systematic count available in Baghdad, let alone smaller or more rural areas.

- December 17, 2006: Police found the bodies of two people, shot dead and tortured, in Jurf al-Sakhar. Police found the bodies of two people shot dead in Mussayab. Police found the bodies of five people, shot and tortured, near Rutba.
- December 19, 2006: The bodies of four people were found in different parts of Mosul. A total of 12 bodies, including two women, were found in different parts of Baquba.
- December 20, 2006: Twelve bodies were found in Baquba. Among those found dead in Baghdad were the coach of the Olympic bicycling team who had been kidnapped three days earlier, a former wrestling star, and a television actor.
- December 21, 2006: A record number 76 bodies were found in Baghdad, police said. All were men aged 20-55 and few showed signs of torture. They were killed with automatic weapons, but not in the execution style attributed to Shi'ite militias.
- December 23, 2006: Police retrieved the bodies of three people from the river in Diwaniya.
- December 24, 2006: A total of 47 bodies were found shot dead and mostly showing signs of torture in different districts of Baghdad.
- December 25, 2006: 40 bodies were found in Baghdad. A total of seven bodies, including three policemen, were found in different districts of Mosul.
- December 26, 2006: 40 bodies were found in Baghdad. The bodies of six people, gagged and bound, were found in two districts in Baquba.
- December 28, 2006: Police found 41 bodies in different parts of Baghdad. Police found three bodies, tortured and shot dead, in Mosul.
- December 31, 2006: A total of 12 bodies were found shot dead and most showing signs of torture in Baghdad. Police said the bodies of four people who had been tortured and shot dead were found in Mahmudiya.
- January 1, 2007: The hospital in Mosul received the bullet-riddled bodies of three brothers. Police found 40 bodies in Baghdad, including 15 in one place near the Sheikh Maa'rouf cemetery in western Baghdad.
- January 2, 2007: Police found five bodies bearing signs of torture and bullet wounds in the town of Nahrawan. Police in Baghdad found the bodies of 45 people.
- January 4, 2007: The bodies of four people were found shot dead in and around the city of Hilla.
- January 5, 2007: Police said they found three bodies bearing signs of torture and bullet wounds in Iskandariya. Police in Baghdad found 47 bodies.
- January 6, 2007: Police recovered 71 bodies in Baghdad. Police found a headless body in the town of Riyadh.
- January 7, 2007: Police found four bodies, including one that had been decapitated, in Suwayra. Police found the bodies of 17 people in Baghdad, many tortured and with gunshot wounds.
- January 8, 2007: Police found 25 bodies in Baghdad. Five unidentified bodies were found in different parts of the northern city of Mosul, police and hospital sources said.

- January 10, 2007: Four bodies with signs of torture and gunshot wounds were found on the outskirts of Qaim. The bodies of four people were found shot dead and bound in the town of Mahaweel. A body was found shot dead and bound in Iskandariya.
- January 11, 2007: Police found 27 bodies in Baghdad.

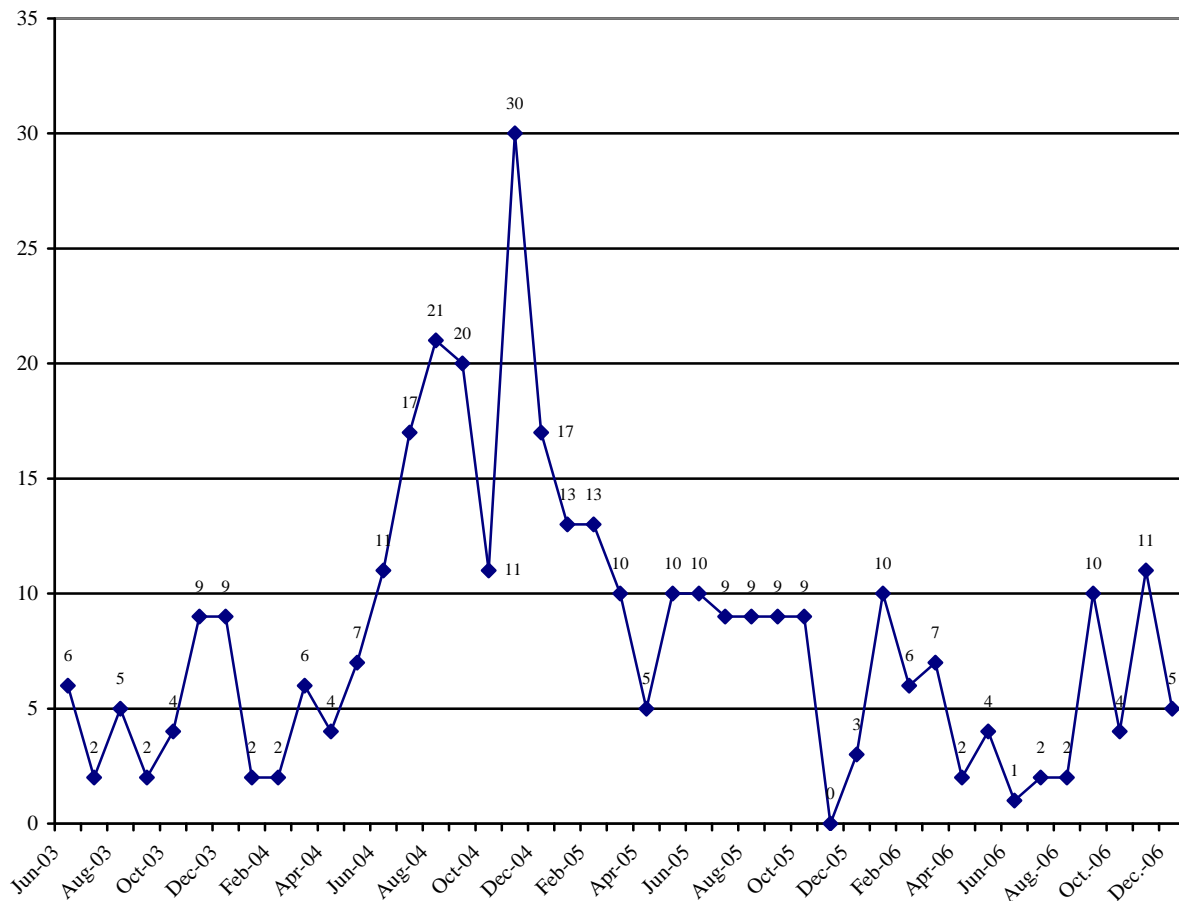
Infrastructure Attacks

The November Department of Defense Stability and Security Report stated that infrastructure attacks decreased to an average of one per week on “infrastructure providing essential services,” a pattern shown in Figure 14. The report added, however, “the present rate of infrastructure attacks, coupled with a security environment that has hampered repairs, weak ministerial oversight, and ineffectual rapid-repair teams, has proved a major impediment to improving the supply of essential services.”¹⁷³

Insurgents destroyed numerous electricity towers leading into Baghdad in late 2006, leaving the capital with little outside sources of electricity; most people relied on generators.

A serious attack on oil infrastructure occurred on January 11, 2007. The Northern Oil Co. announced that suspected Sunni insurgents attacked an oil pipeline delivering oil to Turkey from fields around Kirkuk. The pipeline was severely damaged and continued to burn several hours after the attack. Pipelines running to Turkey were subject to frequent attacks in earlier years of the war, but increased security of pipelines led to a slight decline in late 2006. Iraq began exporting oil to Turkey in September 2006 after a hiatus due to attacks.¹⁷⁴

Figure 14: Attacks on Iraqi Oil and Gas Pipelines, Installations, and Personnel: June 2003-December 2006



Source: Adapted from material provided by "Iraqi Pipeline Watch," Institute for the Analysis of Global Security, available at: <http://www.iags.org/iraqipipelinelwatch.htm> and Brookings Iraq Index, available at: www.brookings.edu/iraqindex.

The Growing Threat of Snipers

The sniper problems continued to increase for US and Iraqi forces. Snipers were prevalent not only in Baghdad, but in Anbar and Diyala Provinces as well. In the majority of the cases, snipers were Sunni insurgents. The increased accuracy took a heavy emotional and physical toll on US troops and contributed to December being the deadliest month for the US in 2006.

The *Los Angeles Times* reported in late December 2006 that snipers targeted the marine supply route in Anbar province. Two marines were killed in two weeks on the stretch of road east of Falluja used to transport supplies in and out of Anbar. Marines used the road 24 hours a day and were constantly on the lookout for roadside bombs, but the snipers were rarely spotted in time.

The insurgents used a new tactic of planting fake roadside bombs and when marines approached to dismantle them, and sniper would take his shot. Marines believed that insurgents used low

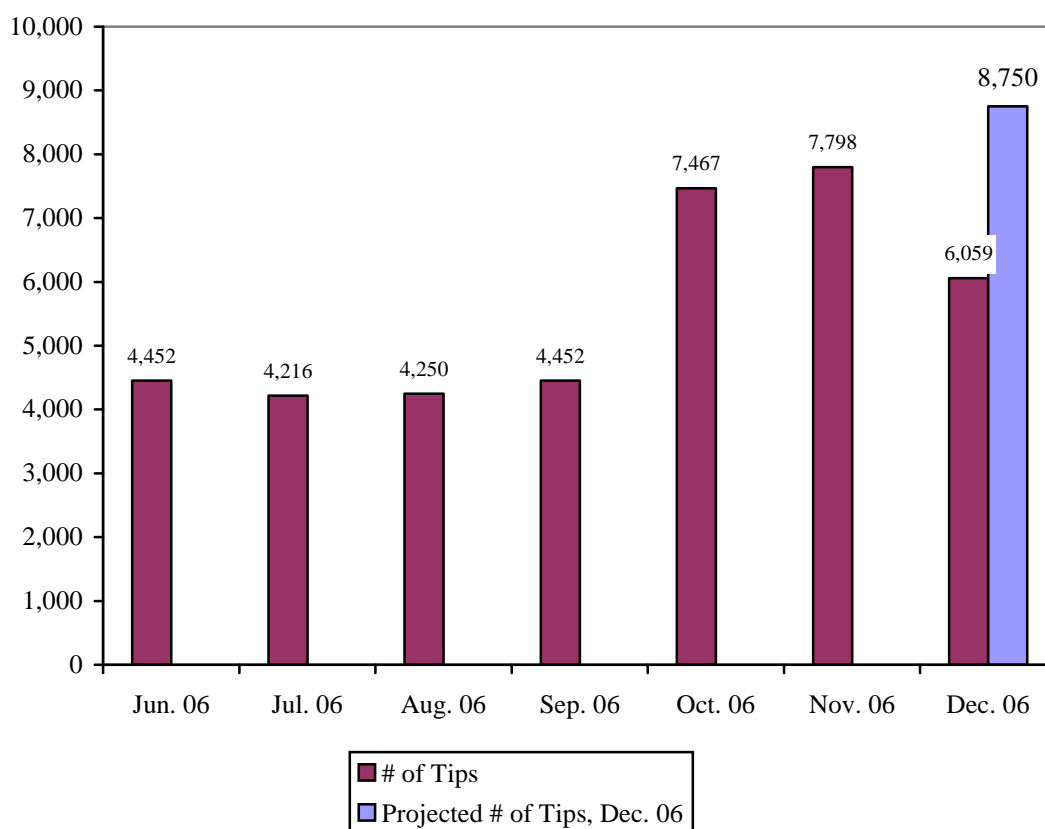
buildings along the highway to make these fake bombs and a raid proved them correct, but higher authorities would not allow the buildings to be torn down.

Medics working in Anbar said that snipers had improved their accuracy significantly. They knew where marines were not covered by metal plates, and precisely targeted these vulnerable spots. Marines also became better at killing and capturing the snipers, but as one marine said, "We take one off, there seems to be another to take his place."¹⁷⁵

Hotline Tips

The number of civilian calls to the national tip hotline is another measure of the level of violence in Iraq as well as trust of Iraqi and US forces. As the Figure 15 below shows, the number of tips increased with the level of violence. US and Iraqi forces said that they relied on civilian tips in many cases and were often able to disable IEDs before they detonated. There were, however, cases in which insurgents called the hotline to draw coalition troops to remotely activated bombs.

Figure 15: Total Number of Civilian Tips across Iraq, June – December 2006



Source: Press Briefing, Maj. Gen. William Caldwell IV, MNF-Iraq, December 27, 2006, available at: www.mnf-iraq.com

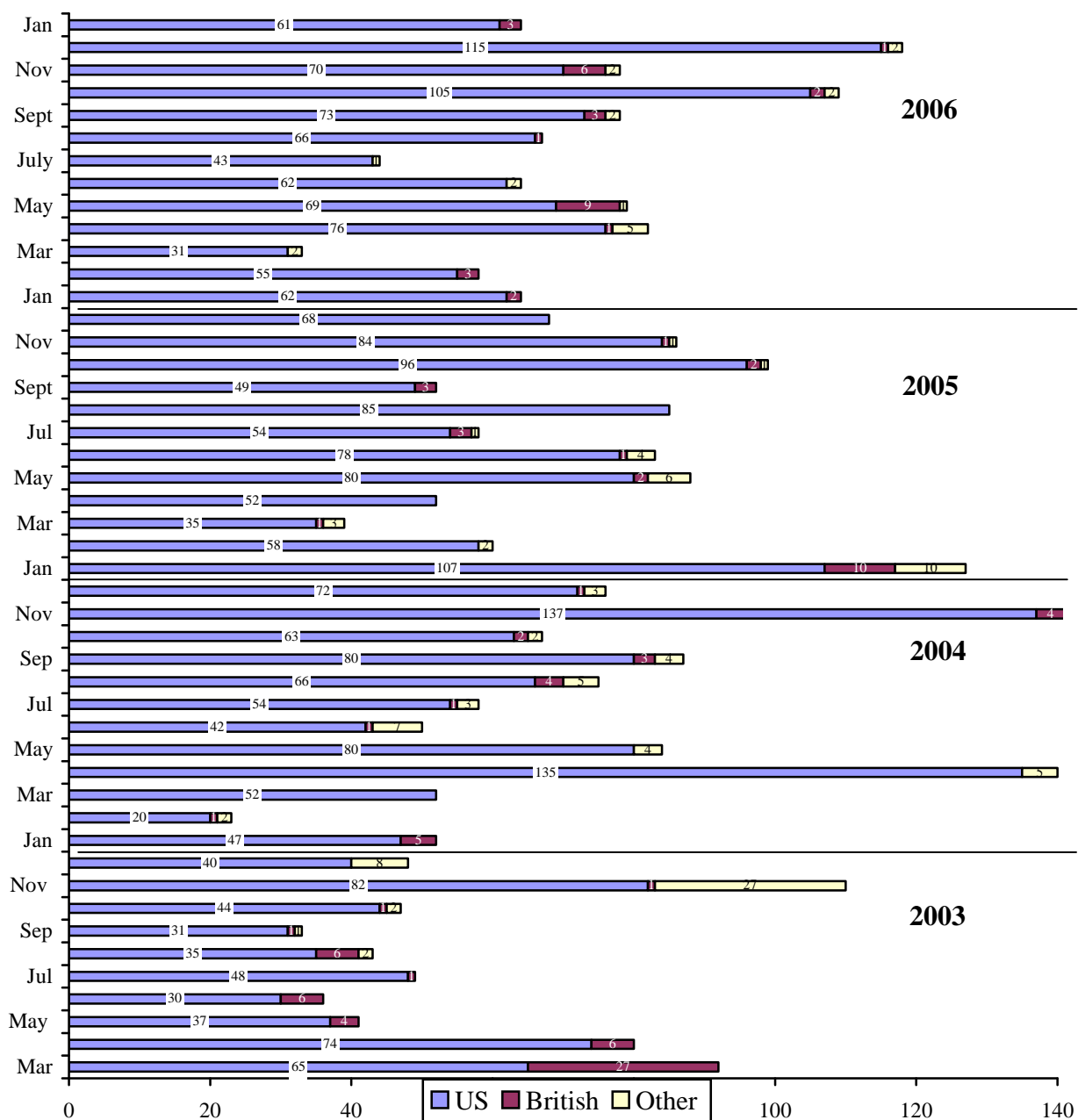
Coalition/US Casualties

The broad patterns in US and Coalition casualties have increasingly become less dominant than those in Iraqi civilian and security forces. They do, however, show the cumulative cost to the US and its allies in human terms and the overall impact of combat relative to sectarian and ethnic violence.

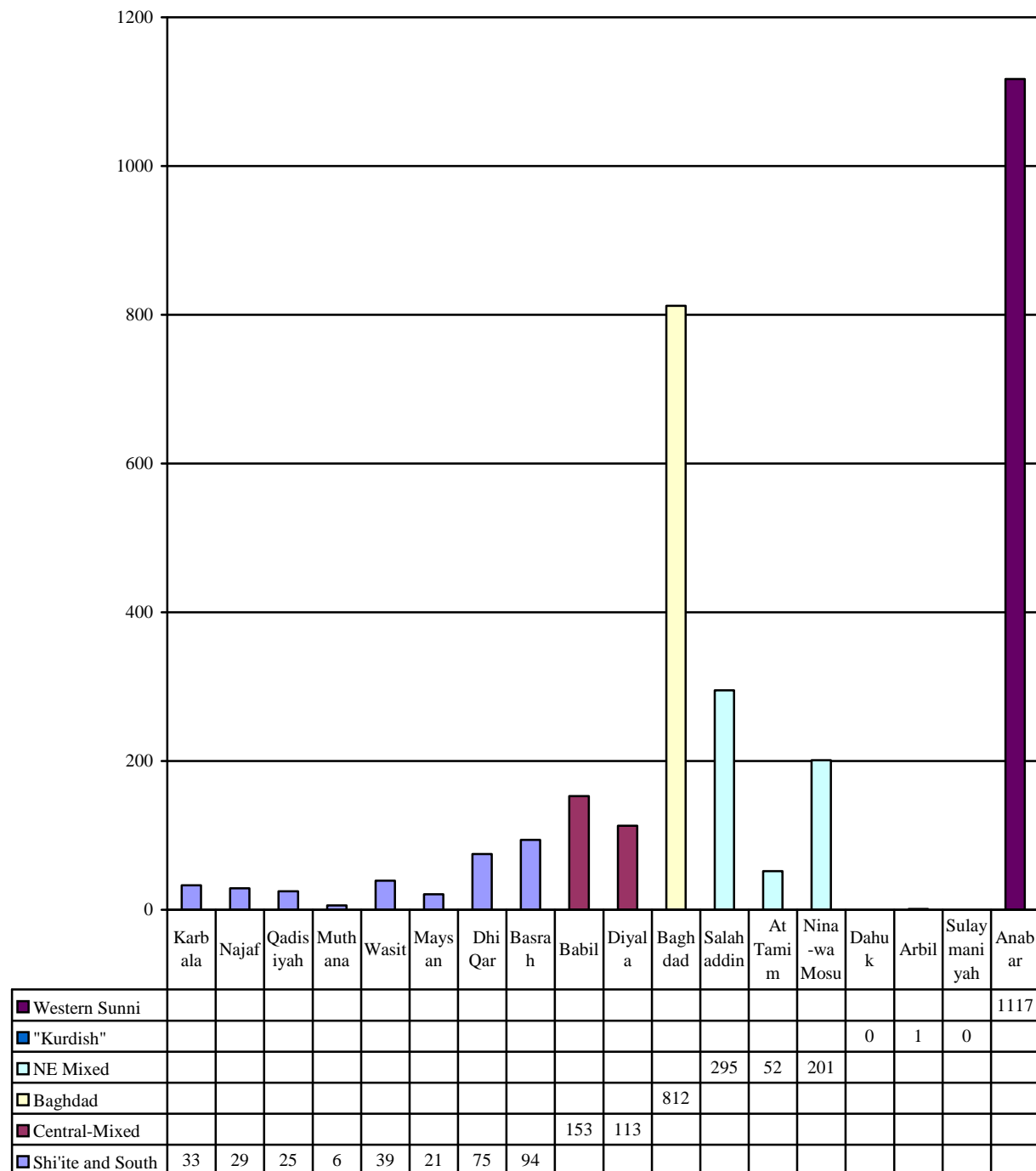
Figure 16 shows the trend in casualties by month. Figure 17 shows the importance of the fighting in Baghdad province, but also in Anbar, Diyala, Dhi Qar, Basra, Babil, Salahaddin, and Ninawa Provinces.

The Department of Defense Stability and Security Report for August-November noted that the majority of attacks, 68%, targeted Coalition forces. The number of US military fatalities reached the 3,000 mark in the last few days of 2006, with 115 killed in December, according to the Iraq Coalition Casualty Count. The Associated Press counted 113 killed in December.¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, according to figures from ICC, December was the deadliest month of the war for US troops from IEDs.

Figures 18 and 19 show, however, that intense combat produces much sharper swings in the number of wounded than in killed. As a result, the number of both killed and wounded is both a much better measure of combat activity and of the sacrifice that military forces make in combat. In addition, Figures 18 and 19 show that the overall patterns in the intensity of Coalition combat and casualties has not increased in proportion to the overall patterns of violence in Iraq. This is because more and more attacks focus on Iraqi targets and are the result of sectarian and ethnic conflict.

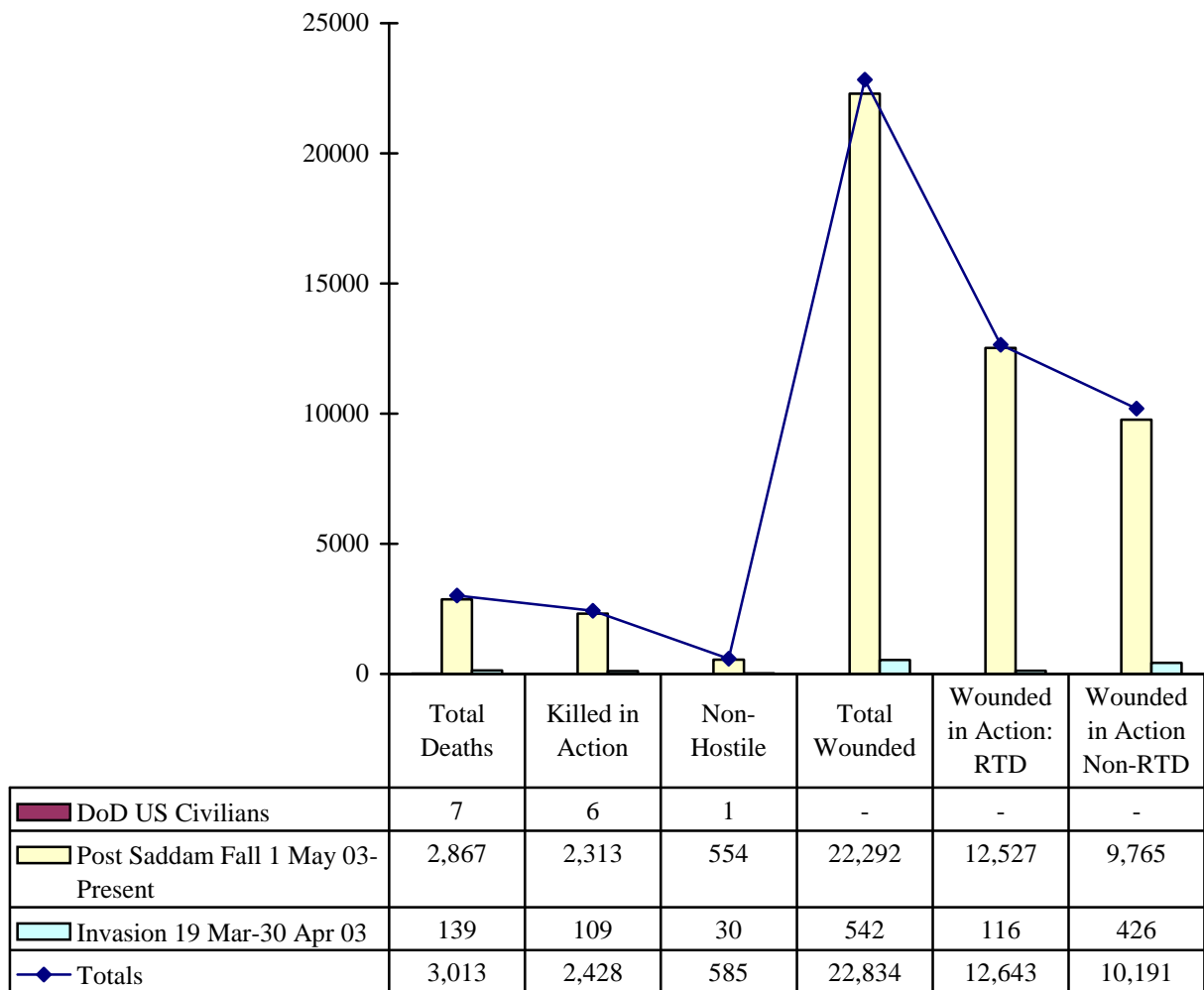
Figure 16: Coalition Deaths By Month and Nationality: March 2003 to January 2007

Source: Adapted from material provided by Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, data as of January 24, 2007, available at: <http://icasualties.org/oif/>

Figure 17: Coalition Casualties by Iraqi Governorate or Province

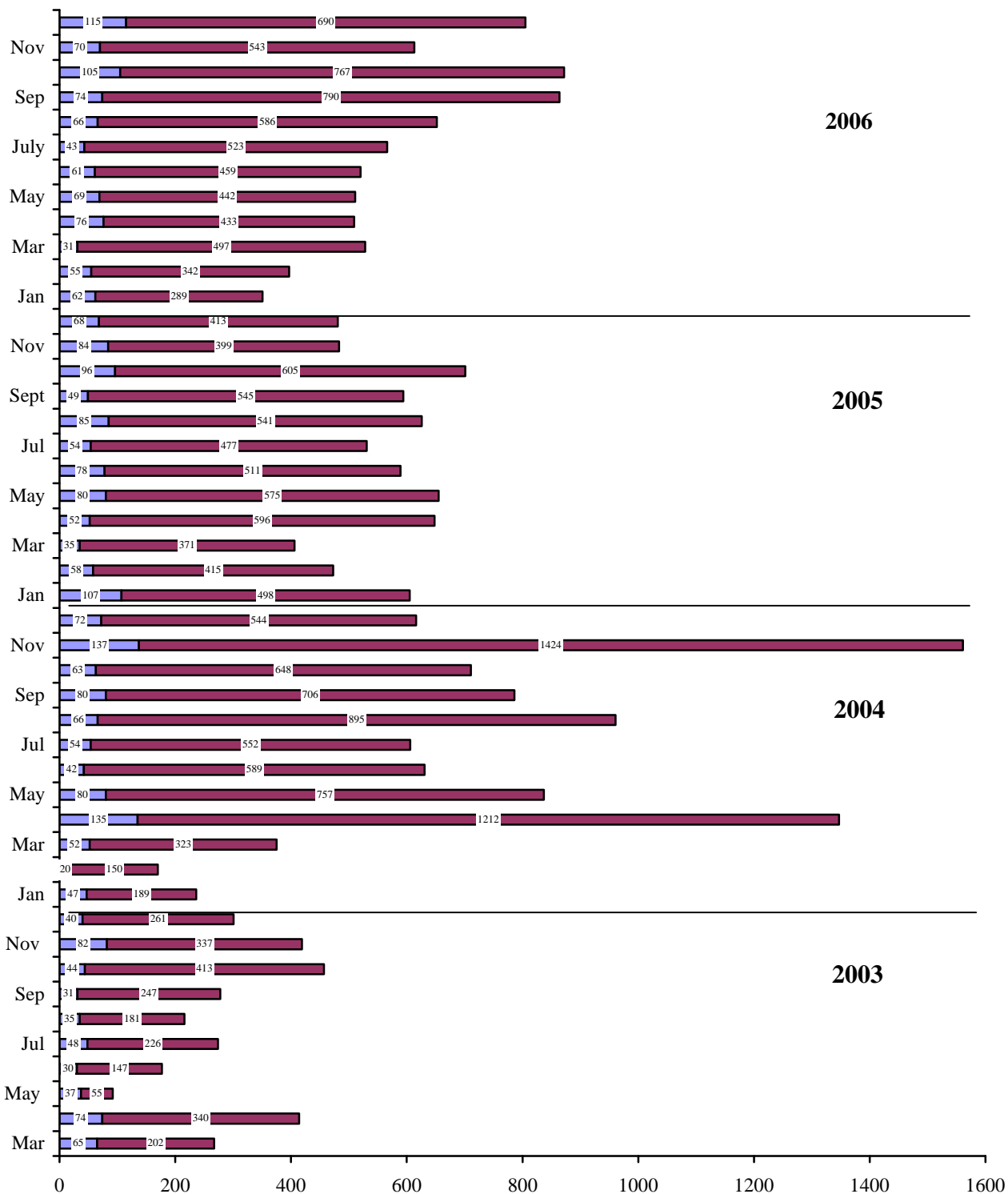
Source: Adapted from material provided by Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, data as of January 24, 2007, available at: <http://icasualties.org/oif/Province.aspx>.

Figure 18: US Casualties in the Iraq War: Total Killed vs. Wounded, March 2003-January 2007



Source: Adapted from material provided by Department of Defense, January 16, 2007, available at: <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/casualty.pdf>

* Note: Totals do not include casualties in enforcing no fly zones before March 19, 2003. Wounded-RTD = equals lighter wounded where personnel were returned to duty within 72 hours. Wounded-Non-RTD= more serious wounds where soldier could not be returned to duty within 72 hours.

Figure 19: US Casualties in the Iraq War: Killed vs. Wounded, March 2003-January 2007

Source: Adapted from material provided by Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, data as of January 16, 2007, available at: http://icasualties.org/oif/US_Chart.aspx and <http://icasualties.org/oif/woundedindex.aspx>

Iraqi Casualties

The nature of the sectarian fighting in the “war after the war” has had steadily grimmer costs in Iraqi lives. As tragic as the numbers in Figures 20 and 21 are, however, they do not provide of a full picture of the sectarian war. What was equally important was “soft” ethnic cleansing by sectarian groups in order to control political and economic space. This involves intimidation campaigns, threats, kidnappings, propaganda, corruption and blackmail to force other ethnic groups out of an area. An important measurement of this cleansing was the number of internally displaced persons, but the key figure – the amount of popular support that these sectarian groups received – was difficult to measure and not represented by the numbers below.

US/MNF-Iraq

The August-November Department of Defense Stability and Security report noted that civilian casualties increased 2% from the previous reporting period.

Although numbers of killed reported by US/MNF-I/non-Iraqi sources varied somewhat, the vast majority most likely underrepresented the actual number. As the violence spread out from Baghdad, the number of Iraqi civilians killed in rural towns and smaller urban areas increased, but often went unreported.

The Associated Press counted 13,738 violent deaths of Iraqi civilians, soldiers, and policemen in all of 2006. This number is roughly 2,500 below the count reported by the Iraqi Ministry of Interior.¹⁷⁷

Iraqi Government Sources

The Interior Ministry announced on December 25 that 12,000 Iraqi policemen – equating to 9 per day - had been killed since the US-led invasion.¹⁷⁸ On January 1, 2007 the MOI also announced that 16,273 Iraqi civilians, soldiers, and policemen died violent deaths in 2006. The number of civilians killed was by far the largest at 14, 298.¹⁷⁹

December was the deadliest month for Iraqi civilians in 2006, according to statistics released by the Iraqi Health, Interior, and Defense Ministries. The death toll was 1,927 in December, compared with 1,846 in November and 1,315 in October. A total of 12,320 civilians died during 2006, according to the Health Minister – about 2,000 less than the MOI reported. This statistic, however, did not include kidnap victims whose fate remained unknown and those wounded who later died.¹⁸⁰

The Health Ministry also said that half of the civilians were killed in the last four months of 2006, which clearly corresponded with the increased level of violence.¹⁸¹ A *Washington Post* article cited the Health Ministry as saying that 17,000 Iraqi civilians police officers died violently in the latter half of 2006 – a significantly larger number than other data released. A Health Ministry official told the Post that the number of Iraqi killed in the first six months, 5,640, tripled in the second half of the year. The total number of civilians and security forces killed would be 22,950.¹⁸²

The Post acknowledged the discrepancies in the 2006 data and said that the numbers could not be reconciled. Again, what is important is not the actual numbers, but that all sources show that

violence increased in the second half of 2006 and that Iraqi civilians were increasingly the victims of sectarian violence.

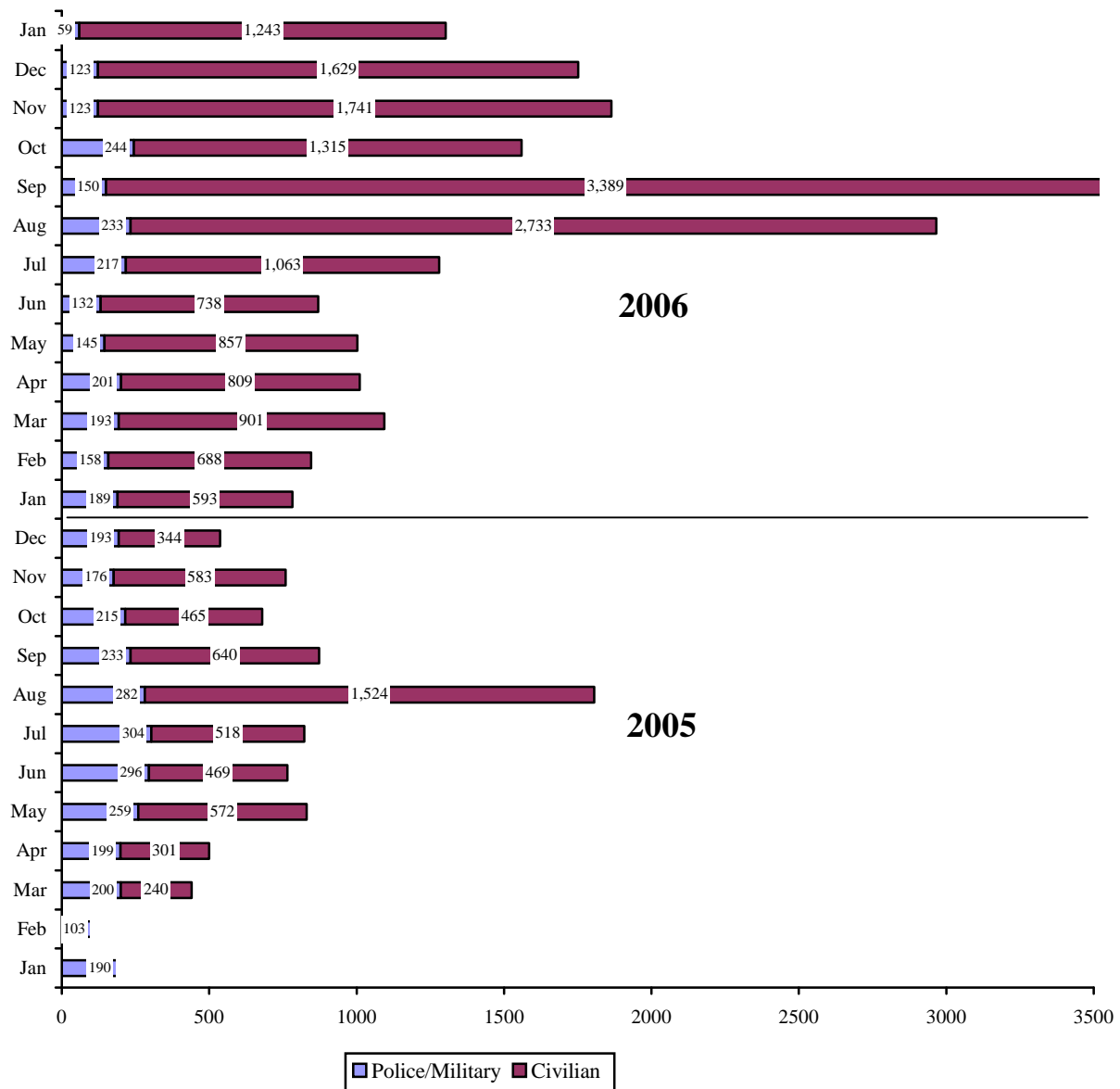
According to data from the Iraqi Ministry of Health and the Medico Legal Institute of Baghdad, the UN reported that 3,462 civilians died violently in November and 2,914 in December. The number of wounded civilians was 3,755 in November and 3,120 in December. In Baghdad alone the number killed violently was 2,230 in November and 2,501 in December. The UN reported that the total number killed violently in 2006 was 34,452, which the Iraqi government rapidly disavowed. The yearly average was 94 civilians killed every day. Further, 36,685 civilians were wounded in 2006.

NGO Estimates

By the late-January, Iraq Body Count estimated that between 54,432 and 60,098 Iraqis civilians had been killed since the US-led invasion in 2003.

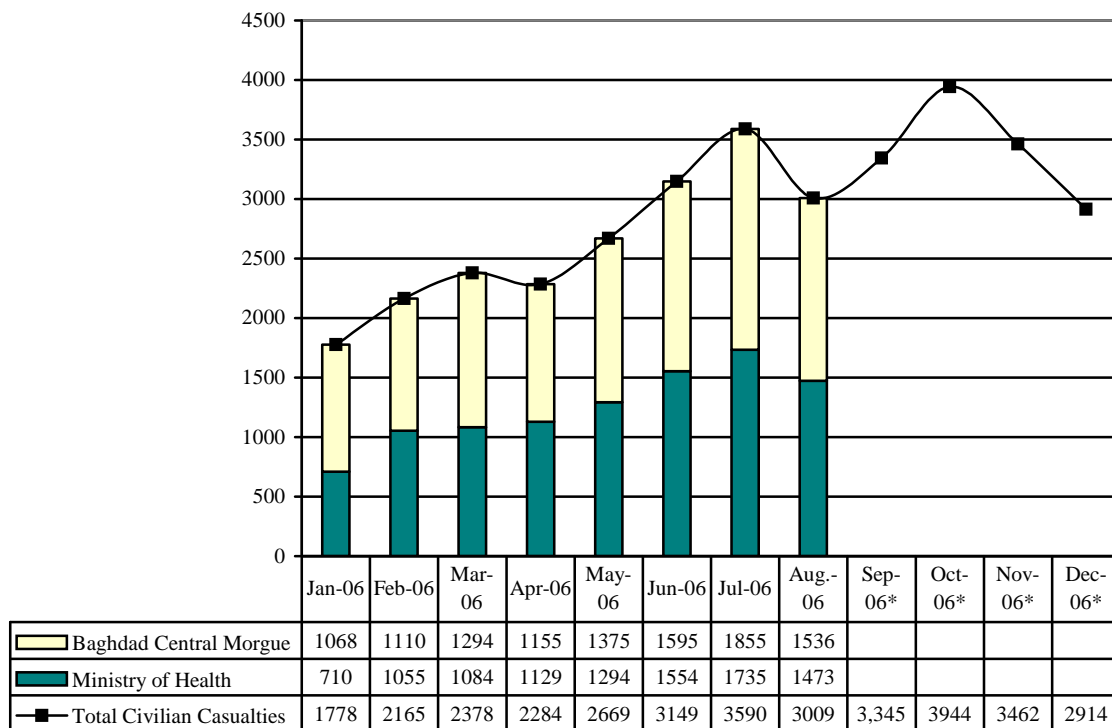
Iraq Coalition Casualties reported 1,629 civilian deaths in December, less than the 1,741 of November and well below the 3,389 reported in September. ICC thus differed with the Iraqi government statistics over which month in 2006 was the deadliest for Iraqi civilians. ICC reported 123 security force deaths in December, the same as in November.

Figure 20: Total Iraqi Security Force and Civilian Casualties by Month: January 2005-January 2007



Source: Adapted from material provided by Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, January 24, 2007, available at: <http://icasualties.org/oif/IraqiDeaths.aspx>

Figure 21: Civilian Casualties Reported by Baghdad Central Morgue and Iraqi Ministry of Health: January – December 2006



Source: UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, "Human Rights Report: 1 May-30 June 2006; 1 July-31 August 2006; Kirk Semple, "Iraqi Death Toll Rises Above 100 Per Day, U.N. Says," *New York Times*, July 19, 2006.

*note: After August 2006 the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq Human Rights Report did not separate out deaths reported by the Ministry of Health and deaths reported by the Baghdad Morgue. In November and December 2006 the Report stated that figures were compiled from the Iraqi Ministry of Health and the Medico-Legal Institute of Baghdad. In the month of December, figures from some Governorates were not yet included in the total provided.

XI. The Role of Outside States: Accusations Abound

Other states continued to express their concerns about the deteriorating security situation in Iraq. Two key majority Sunni neighbors – Jordan and Saudi Arabia – were particularly concerned about the flow of Sunni refugees into their country and the prospect of Shi'ite domination of the region if Iraq's Shi'a majority waged a cleansing campaign against Sunnis. Syria was also deeply concerned about the refugee crisis and overflowing sectarian tensions.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice rejected negotiations with Syrian and Iran saying that the compensation required would be too great.¹⁸³ However, the August-November Department of Defense Stability and Security update said, "The United States is facilitating regional negotiations on mutual interests and can help find common ground on contentious transnational issues."¹⁸⁴ The DoD Report also stated regarding Iran and Syria:¹⁸⁵

Iran and Syria are undermining the Government of Iraq's political progress by providing both active and passive support to anti-government and anti-Coalition forces. The Coalition and the Government of Iraq have attempted to counter Iranian and Syrian influence diplomatically and by tightening security at the borders.

The *Wall Street Journal* reported on January 9, 2007 that the US was pursuing a strategy to convince its Sunni Arab state allies that it was counteracting the influence of Iran, whose involvement in Iraq was of growing concern to Sunni countries. The Bush administration promised to keep US forces in Iraq as long as necessary as well as increase naval forces in the Persian Gulf and deepen cooperation with Gulf States. The article states, "There are also advanced plans under way to knit together the air-defense systems of the six smaller Gulf States, including Qatar, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates, and to build a US-administered missile-defense system... One proposal calls for the US to hold combined air exercises with Oman and the UAE."

President Bush described the role of outside nations in Iraq as follows in his January 10 speech:¹⁸⁶

We will work with others to prevent Iran from gaining nuclear weapons and dominating the region...

We will use America's full diplomatic resources to rally support for Iraq from nations throughout the Middle East. Countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and the Gulf States need to understand that an American defeat in Iraq would create a new sanctuary for extremists and a strategic threat to their survival. These nations have a stake in a successful Iraq that is at peace with its neighbors, and they must step up their support for Iraq's unity government. We endorse the Iraqi government's call to finalize an International Compact that will bring new economic assistance in exchange for greater economic reform...

Secretary Rice elaborated on the President's comments in her testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on January 11:

While many of us are working to strengthen peace in the region, two governments have unfortunately chosen to align themselves with the forces of violent extremism – both in Iraq and across the Middle East. One is Syria. Despite many appeals, including from Syria's fellow Arab states, the leaders in Damascus continue to destabilize Iraq and their neighbors and support terrorism. The problem here is not a lack of talk with Syria but a lack of action by Syria.

Iran is the other. If the government in Tehran wants to help stabilize the region, as it now claims, it should end its support for violent extremists who destroy the aspirations of innocent Lebanese, Palestinians, and Iraqis. And it should end its pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability. I repeat my offer today: If Iran

suspends its enrichment of uranium – which is, after all, an international demand, not just an American one – then the United States is prepared to reverse 27 years of policy, and I will meet with my Iranian counterpart – anytime, anywhere – to discuss every facet of our countries' relationship. Until then, we will continue to work with the Iraqis and use all of our power to limit and counter the activities of Iranian agents who are attacking our people and innocent civilians in Iraq.

Saudi Arabia

In early January the Saudi crown prince, Prince Sultan Abdul Aziz, said that the US and coalition forces should “review the goals of their presence and the strategies of their remaining” in Iraq. He indicated that the coalition forces had not achieved much “positive” progress during the war. He also urged neighboring countries to “stop backing sects and political current inside Iraq.” The latter statement was clearly in reference to Iran. He warned again against the potential separation of Iraq into autonomous regions, which could threaten the rights of Sunnis.¹⁸⁷

Syria

The August – November Stability and Security in Iraq Report by the Department of Defense said of Syria:¹⁸⁸

Despite repeated warnings by the United States, the Syrian regime continues to provide safe haven, border transit, and limited logistical support to Iraqi insurgents, especially elements associated with the former Iraqi Ba'ath Party. The Syrians also permit former regime elements to engage in organizational activities, such that Syria has emerged as an important organizational and coordination hub for elements of the former Iraqi regime. Syria has taken a relatively pragmatic approach in dealing with Islamic extremist groups, such as al-Qaeda in Iraq and foreign fighters; although it has detained and deported many foreign fighters, Syria has allowed other to transit to Iraq.

On January 14 Iraqi President Talibani traveled to Syria; it was the first visit since the two countries formally restored diplomatic relations in the fall of 2006.

Iran

The US continued to accuse Iran of propagating violence in Iraq. The Pentagon's August-November Stability and Security Report said of Iranian foreign influence in Iraq:¹⁸⁹

The Iranian government sees an unprecedented opportunity to bring Iraq into its sphere of influence and to prevent it from re-emerging as a threat to Iranian interests. Tehran also views the situation in Iraq through the prism of Iran's ongoing tension with the United States and the West – especially the continued presence of US forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Persian Gulf, which threatens to constrain Iran's regional ambitions. Iran seeks to ensure that the Coalition bears political, economic, and human casualty costs to deter future US regional intervention. To achieve these objectives, Iran continues to pursue a dual-track strategy of supporting Shi'a unity and a stable government in Iraq – either a functioning, unified Shi'a dominated central government or a federated state – on one hand, while facilitating militia activities in Iraq on the other. Iran has developed links to southern Iraq and the Kurdish region to facilitate access and perhaps to safeguard its interests in case Iraq were to split into a collection of sectarian enclaves.

Other sources blamed the US as well. A Crisis Group report said that the Iran had thus far been unable to have a stabilizing effect in Iraq largely because of the “conviction in Tehran that Washington is seeking to build a hostile regional order.”¹⁹⁰

Iran rejected the US charges. It said in December that it was already helping to stabilize Iraq and that there did not need to be an agreement with the US. The Iranian ambassador to Iraq, Kazemi-Qomi, said that Iran supported all Iraqis, not just Shi'a. He appeared disinterested with

discussions in Washington over negotiating with Tehran, but clearly believed that a stable Iraq was in the best interest of Iran. "Security in Iraq will strip foreign troops of any pretext to prolong their presence in the country," he said. "Security in Iraq will deprive terrorists of any safe haven, and we will no longer see an influx of Iraqi [refugees] to Iran."¹⁹¹

More than words were involved. In late December US forces captured several Iranians in Iraq, acting on intelligence that they were plotting attacks against Iraqi civilians and US and Iraqi forces. Two of them were released because they had diplomatic credentials, but at least four others were still being held. The White House said, "We suspect this event validates our claim about Iranian meddling," but the US did not offer the evidence for the Iranians' capture.¹⁹² A British official told the BBC that five of the men still held were intelligence officials who were "up to no good," and were in Iraq to influence Prime Minister Maliki.¹⁹³

The Iranian government condemned the arrests and said that they could have "unpleasant consequences." A spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry said that President Talabani invited the two diplomats and four others to Iraq. The spokesman added, "The Iraqi government is responsible for their release, and the occupying forces should be held responsible based on international regulations."¹⁹⁴

On January 11, 2007 US raided an Iranian consulate in Irbil, Iraq. Iranian news reported that US forces took custody of five individuals and seized computers and documents. The US military did not confirm the raid, but said it had taken six people in Irbil into custody for being tied to attack on US and Iraqi forces. The Iranian government said it was up to the Iraqi government to secure their release. It was the second arrest of Iranians by US forces in less than two weeks, and greatly heightened tensions with Iran.¹⁹⁵

Iraq's Foreign Minister, Hoshyar Zebari, a Kurd, said that the seized Iranians were working in a liaison office that had government approval and was in the process of being approved as a consulate. He also said that US forces tried to capture more people at the airport in Irbil, prompting a confrontation with Kurdish troops. "We don't want Iraq to be a battleground for settling scores with other countries," Zebari told CNN. The US Embassy said it was assured the building was not a consulate.¹⁹⁶ Zebari also said several days later that Iraq planned to create more Iranian consulates in Iraq and hoped to increase the number of border entrance points between the two countries.¹⁹⁷

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said that the attacks against Iranians in Iraq were part of a broad military offensive against foreign interference ordered by President Bush in the fall of 2006. Secretary of Defense Gates said that in no way was the US trying to pull Iran into direct conflict and that US forces would not cross the border into Iran to apprehend individuals. A military official also confirmed that one of the Iranians captured and released in Baghdad was a member of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Quds Force.¹⁹⁸

General George Casey also said in a Press Conference, "I don't think there's any disagreement on the fact that these folks we have captured are foreign intelligence agents in [Iraq] working with Iraqis to destabilize Iraq and target coalition forces that are here at Iraq's request."¹⁹⁹ The Iraqi stance on the US initiative against Iranians in Iraq was unclear, but Secretary Rice – in an interview with the BBC on January 12 – made it obvious that the US would continue to pursue "these networks."

Despite continued allegations of weapons transfers and Iranian meddling in Iraq, the US government had not provided significant evidence to support these claims. A British officer operating out of Basra said, "We do have intelligence which suggests that weapons and ammunitions are being smuggled in from Iran... We don't always manage to find any." US military officials in Diyala also said that they had yet to seize munitions or personnel at the border.²⁰⁰

XII. Views from the Iraqi Public

The November Department of Defense Quarterly Report to Congress stated that based on information in Department of State poll, about 60% of Iraqis reported worsening security conditions. As Figure 22 shows, however, Iraqi attitudes varied sharply by province. At a local level, particularly in the south, some Iraqis felt safer, but this was most likely a result of sectarian displacement. Iraqis living in the Tikrit/Baquba area felt the least safe, which corresponds with an increase in sectarian violence in those areas in the fall of 2006. The Report also said that about 25% of the Iraqi population believed that the Iraqi army and police were “corrupt and driven by sectarian interests.”²⁰¹

Views on Security and the Role of the US

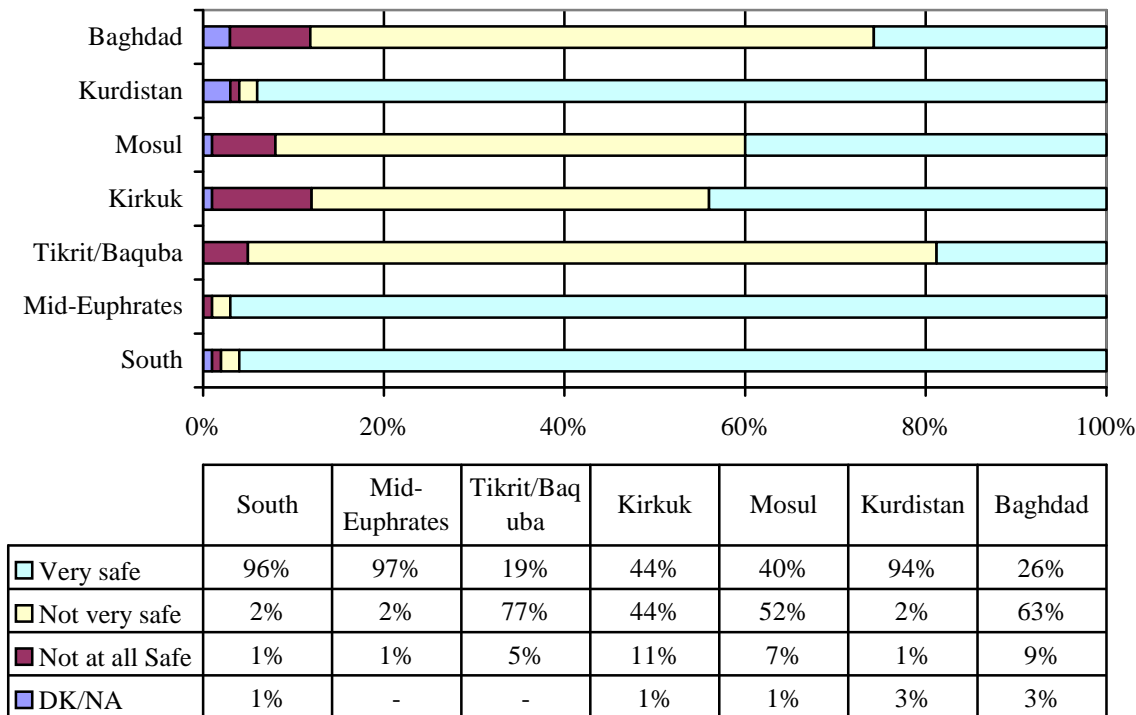
A poll conducted by the Iraq Center for Research and Strategic Studies in late November found that 95% of Iraqis felt that the security situation was better in 2003 than it was in late 2006. About half of those polled favored an immediate withdrawal of US troops, 11% wanted US troops to withdraw when the Iraqi government made the request, 14% believed US-led troops should withdraw when violence ceased, and 20% favored a phased withdrawal beginning at the time of the polling. A total of 66% believed that the security situation would improve if coalition forces left Iraq.²⁰²

A Crisis Group report, however, said that the majority of Iraqis interviewed still believed that the violence was a result of a political power struggle rather than a civil war between civilians.²⁰³

In early January 2007, the *Washington Post* interviewed several Shi'ites in Baghdad and found that most had changed their opinion of the US presence in Iraq from 2003 to 2007. Two working class Shi'ite friends rejoiced when US led forces toppled Saddam Hussein and the Coalition Provisional Authority disbanded the old Iraqi Army and refused to negotiate with Ba'athists. However, recent US efforts to involve ex-Ba'athists into the political process and security forces turned the men's opinion about the US and US forces.

Both men believed that the US and Iraqi Shi'ites had a common enemy – Sunnis – and that Iraq's majority sect would gain control after centuries of oppression. But at the beginning of the fourth year of war in Iraq, Shi'ites saw the US as obstructing their climb to power. One of the men said, “What future? Now the Shia are suffering from a campaign of genocide. The Americans are in total control of our security forces. Our elected government does not have the power to move a single military unit. How do you expect me not to be pessimistic?”

Shi'ites in government said that the US was scared that the Shia would take over Iraq and persecute Sunnis. A parliamentary member from SCIRI said, “We know the US is under great pressure from Arabic and Islamic countries, who are Sunni. They fear the growing power of the Shia inside Iraq.” Another Shi'ite from the Dawa party said of the US, “They are going to lose the Shi'ites. And they won't win the Sunnis back, because they attacked them at the beginning. So now both sides will lose confidence in the United States.”²⁰⁴

Figure 22: How Safe do you Feel in your Neighborhood? October 2006

Source: "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Department of Defense, Quarterly Report to Congress, November 2006, p. 25

Data points are estimated from the DoD report.

Margin of error +/- 4% for overall sample, but various among regions.

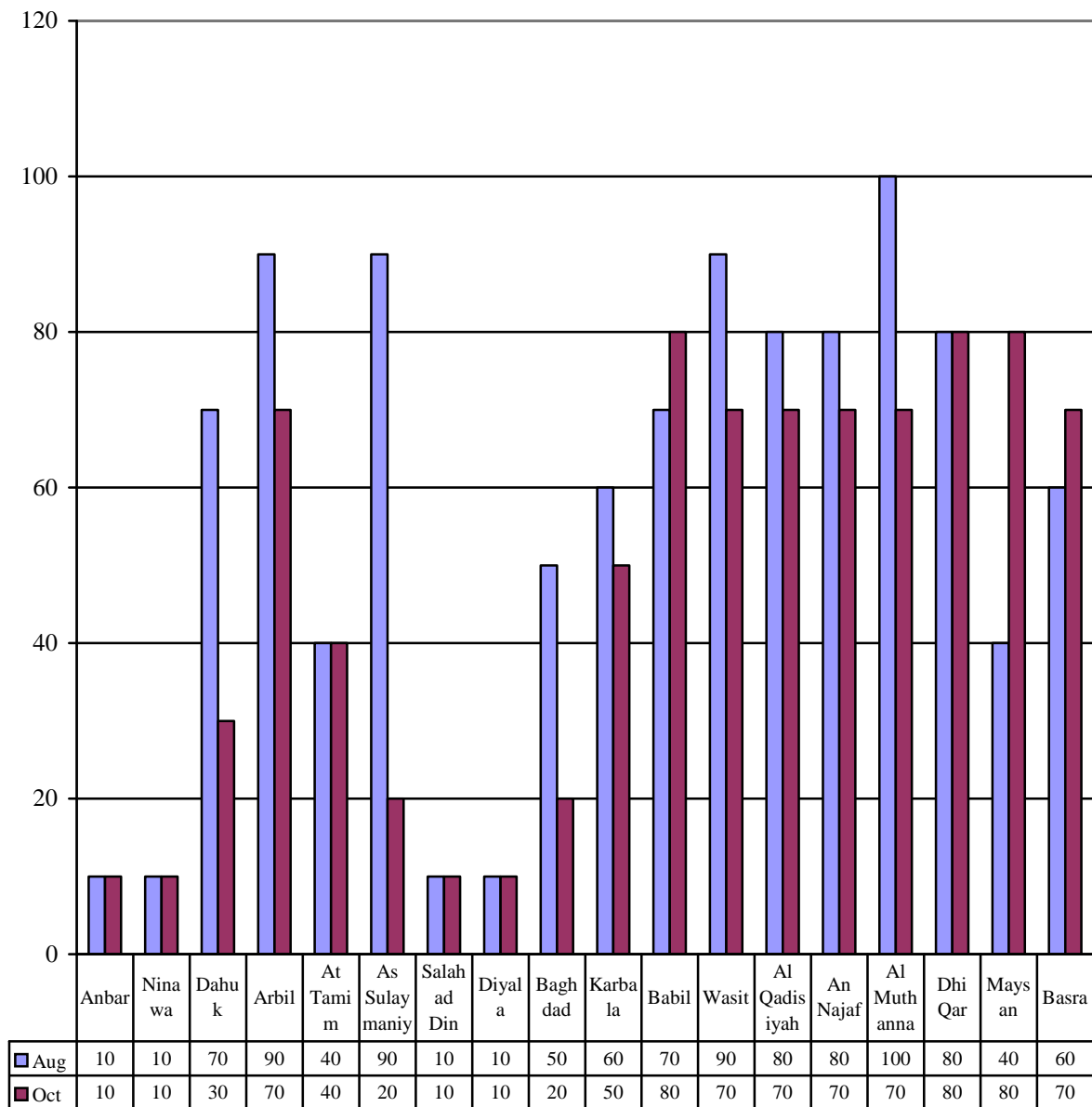
Views on the Iraqi Government

The November Department of Defense Report to Congress indicated that overall, confidence in the Iraqi government fell from the previous reporting period. As Figure 23 shows, Iraqis gained confidence in the southern Maysan and Basra Provinces, but this is most likely because sectarian displacement left the south mostly Shi'ite.

The poll by the Iraq Center for Research and Strategic Studies found that between 84% and 91% of respondents labeled the government's performance as "very poor" in "the implementation of promises, reconstruction efforts, dealing with sectarian strife, providing jobs and basic necessities. Roughly 1.5-3% rated the government's performance as "good". About 67% said that they were not confident about the situation improving with the current policymakers in Parliament. Moreover, only 50% said that if there were new elections, they would vote for the same individuals or parties.²⁰⁵

Figure 23: Confidence in the ability of the Iraqi Government to protect from threats, August and October 2006

Percent people answering “a great deal” or “some” confidence



Source: “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq,” Department of Defense, Quarterly Report to Congress, November 2006, p. 26

Data points are estimates from the DoD report.

Sample Size ~8,000, margin of error +/- 1%

XIII. The US Role in Iraq and Lessons of Warfare

President Bush conceded for the first time that the US was not winning in Iraq in late December 2006. The President said that the US was neither winning nor losing – a significant change from his statement before the November elections that the US was “absolutely winning.” He also announced that he was considering a permanent increase in troop strength of the US Army and Marine Corp of 92,000. The planned rise in numbers came after top US commanders increasingly warned that the US military was stressed and at its breaking point due to the prolonged deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan.²⁰⁶

At the same time as the President stated that the US was no longer winning, USCENTCOM Commander, General John Abizaid announced plans to retire from his post in March 2007. He had served as top Commander in the region since 2003 and had already extended his duty at the request of former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Gen. Abizaid also said that he was unsure that a surge in US troops in Iraq would help quell violence.²⁰⁷

While in Iraq in late December, Secretary of Defense Gates said that he was conducting talks with key US commanders and “reserving judgment” on whether or not to advocate a surge of troops to Iraq. General Casey was said that he needed to see a complete plan of the purpose of additional American troops, but he was not opposed to the idea.²⁰⁸

Gates and the Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Peter Pace, traveled to Texas in late December to brief President Bush on Iraq. The President said that he was making “good progress” in forming a plan for Iraq, but that he would not be rushed. He added that the “key to success” was an Iraqi government “willing to deal with the elements there that are trying to prevent this young democracy from succeeding.”

The Pentagon announced on December 27 that it planned to send about 3,500 troops to USCENTCOM's forward operating base in Kuwait to be quick responders to any emergencies in the region.²⁰⁹ Various sources reported that military officials and advisers to President Bush said that the ‘surge’ option would include anywhere between 10,000 and 30,000 US troops, most of whom would be sent to Baghdad to engage in a ‘clear, hold, and build’ strategy; the President had yet to announce his formal plan.

Administration officials also said that the President planned to supplement the additional forces with a \$1 billion for job creation in Iraq. Prime Minister Maliki was said to agree to Bush's planned troop ‘surge’ and promised an equal number of Iraq troops. The Iraqi Army troops were expected to come from the northern Kurdish region, leading some US officials to question how effective they would be in Baghdad.²¹⁰

As part of a new strategy in Iraq, administration officials indicated that President Bush would name Lt. Gen. David H. Petraeus as the top military commander in Iraq to replace Gen. George W. Casey, Jr. Adm. William J. Fallon was also expected to be named head of USCENTCOM after Gen. John Abizaid's departure.²¹¹ At the diplomatic level, the US ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, was expected to be nominated for the top US position at the United Nations. Administration officials said that the envoy to Pakistan, Ryan C. Crocker, could be Khalilzad's replacement.²¹²

On January 10, 2007 President Bush officially announced the new US strategy in Iraq. He accepted responsibility for mistakes that were made as a result of previous US strategy in the war

in Iraq. He also acknowledged the key point, "In our discussions, we all agreed that there is no magic formula for success in Iraq. And one message came through loud and clear: Failure in Iraq would be a disaster for the United States." The President stated that the consequences of failure would be the growth of Islamic extremism, progress in Iran's nuclear program, and the creation of a safehaven for terrorists to attack the United States.

Bush proposed a new set of benchmarks for the Iraqi government and security forces and committed an additional 17,500 US troops to Baghdad and 4,000 troops to Anbar Province. He reiterated that there was no set date for US withdrawal, but that US aid and troop support for Iraq was contingent on Iraqi making progress on its benchmarks. The President linked Iraq to the greater struggle on the war on terror and said that the "challenge playing out in the Middle East... is the decisive ideological struggle of our time." A new bipartisan Congressional working would also be created to meet regularly with the administration to address the war on terror.²¹³

The new Army and Marine Counterinsurgency Manual reflected some of the hardwon lessons of the Iraq war. For example, the manual stressed that 80% of counterinsurgency efforts should be along political and economic lines and only 20% should be military.²¹⁴ Reconstruction in Iraq, however, only began in earnest with the creation of provincial reconstruction teams in 2006 and the first real initiative to create jobs for Iraqis would enter the US strategy in the 2007 fiscal year.

In answer to advance policy questions from the Senate Armed Services Committee, Lt. Gen. David H. Petraeus stated that the US made the following mistakes up to that point in the war:²¹⁵

First, there were a number of assumptions and assessments that did not bear out. Prominent among them was the assumption that Iraqis would remain in their barracks and ministry facilities and resume their functions as soon as interim governmental structures were in place. That obviously did not transpire. The assessment of the Iraqi infrastructure did not capture how fragile and abysmally maintained it was (and this challenge, of course, was compounded by looting). Additionally, although most Iraqis did, in fact, greet us as liberators (and that was true even in most Sunni Arab areas), there was an underestimation of the degree of resistance that would develop as, inevitably, a Shi'a majority government began to emerge and the Sunni Arabs, especially, the Saddamists, realized that the days of their dominating Iraq were over. Sunni Arab resistance was also fueled by other actions noted below. Beyond that, as noted recently by President Bush, there were a number of situations that did not develop as was envisioned:

- There was the feeling that elections would enhance the Iraqi sense of nationalism. Instead, the elections hardened sectarian positions as Iraqis voted largely based on ethnic and sectarian group identity.
- There was an underestimation of the security challenges in Iraq, particularly in 2006 in the wake of the bombing of the mosque in Samara, coupled with an over-estimation of our ability to create new security institutions following the disbandment of the Iraqi security forces – which was not helped by the planning issues described below.
- It repeatedly took us time to recognize changes in the security environment and to react to them. What began as an insurgency has morphed into a conflict that includes insurgent attacks, terrorism, sectarian violence, and violent crime. Our responses have had to continue to evolve in response, but that has not always been easy.

A number of mistakes were made by both political and military leaders during the course of Operation Iraqi Freedom:

- The very slow (if that) execution of the reconciliation component of de-Ba'athification left tens of thousands of former Ba'ath Party members (many of them Sunni Arabs, but also some Shi'a) feeling that they had no future opportunities in, or reason to support, the new Iraq. To be fair to CPA, AMB Bremer intended to execute reconciliation (or exceptions to the de-Ba'athification order) and gave me permission, e.g., to do so on a trial basis in Ninevah Province; however, when we submitted the results

- of the reconciliation commission conducted for Mosul University and subsequent requests for exception generated by Iraqi processes with judicial oversight, no action was taken on them by the de-Ba'athification Committee in Baghdad. As realization set in among those affected that there was to be no reconciliation, we could feel support for the new Iraq ebbing in Sunni Arab majority areas.
- . Disbanding the Iraqi army (which was, to be sure, an army that Iraq did not need in the long term as it had vastly more senior officers than were remotely required and was more of a jobs program than a competent military force) without simultaneously announcing a stipend and pension program for those in the Army, the future plan for Iraq's defense forces, and provisions for joining those forces undoubtedly created tens of thousands of former soldiers and officers who were angry, feeling disrespected, and worried about how they would feed their families. (The stipend plan was eventually announced some 5 weeks after the disestablishment was announced, but it did not cover senior officers, who remained, therefore, influential critics of the new Iraq.) This action likely fueled, at least in part, the early growth of the insurgency and anti-coalition feeling.
 - . We took too long to recognize the growing insurgency and to take steps to counter it, though we did eventually come to grips with it.
 - . We took too long to develop the concepts and structures needed to build effective Iraqi security forces to assist in providing security to the Iraqi people.
 - . Misconduct at Abu Gharyb and in other less sensational, but still damaging cases, inflamed the insurgency and damaged the credibility of
 - . Coalition forces in Iraq, in the region, and around the world.
 - . We obviously had inadequate plans, concepts, organizations, resources, and policies for the conduct of Phase IV (stability and reconstruction) operations; consequently, we were slow to move into Phase IV operations.
 - . We had, for the first 15 months or more in Iraq, an inadequate military structure. With hindsight, it is clear that it took too long to transform V
 - . Corps HQs into CJTF-7 HQs, and that even when we had CJTF-7 HQs, it was not capable of looking both up and down (i.e. performing both political-military/strategic functions and serving as the senior operational headquarters for counterinsurgency and stability operations). Moreover, it is clear that we should have built what eventually became MNSTC-I HQs and the TF-34 HQs (which oversees detainee/interrogation operations) much sooner, along with the other organizations that were eventually established (e.g., the Gulf Region Corps of Engineer HQs).
 - . Although not a problem in the 101st Airborne Division AOR during my time as 101st commander, it is clear that in certain other AORs there were more tasks than troops – especially in Anbar Province for at least the first year and likely in other areas as well.
 - . Finally, the strategy pursued in the wake of the bombing of the Al Askariya Mosque in Samarra in February 2006 was unable to arrest the spiraling violence and rise of harmful sectarian activities. Repeated operations in Baghdad, in particular, to clear, hold, and build did not prove durable due to lack of sufficient Iraqi and Coalition Forces for the holdphase of the operations.

The gradual transition of the war from one involving extremists and activists to mass popular support of armed sectarian groups drew into question the ability of the US to prevent escalation to full scale civil war. The Bush strategy had the potential – with the help of the Iraqi government – to slowly bring life back to normal in the capital, but sectarian support of armed groups had spread throughout the country. It was unclear if US and Iraqi forces – with questionable loyalties – could stop the trend toward political and economic control by sectarian groups.

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