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The “War After the War” In Iraq:

Evolving Conflict, Possible Scenarios, and the Data and Analytic Tools Needed to Understand What is Happening

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The “War After the War”

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It is becoming increasingly clear that the U.S. is fighting a “war after the war.” At this point in time, outsiders – and perhaps insiders – simply do not know enough to be either pessimistic or optimistic. Media reporting focuses on the event of the day – good or bad – but is unclear that insiders in the CPA, USCENTCOM and the U.S. government are all that much better off. As for military analysts, military analysis can only be as good as the facts available, and many of the key facts are missing.

There is no way to predict the outcome of the war, but it is possible to put current trends in perspective and to at least consider the kinds of scenarios that may play out over time. It is also possible to consider what kinds of data and analysis might improve our current understanding of what is really happening, and to provide the basis for more adequate US government reporting, media coverage, and military analysis.

The Patterns in the “War After the War” to Date

During the last two weeks, the U.S. has seen both a major success in the killing of Uday and Qusay and a major tragedy in the bombing of the Jordanian embassy. Some analysts declared victory in the first case and other now talk about a serious reversal because of the second. In reality, however, such high profile events are not turning points or symbols of either victory or defeat. They are rather part of much broader patterns that have been developing ever since the fall of Baghdad.

Saddam and Baath loyalists seem to have taken at least some steps to prepare for a guerrilla conflict – or war after the war -- before the US and Britain launched their attack. They seem to have dispersed weapons and explosives in many areas, and senior cadres seem to have made plans to disperse in the areas around Baghdad and Mosul, and the Sunni triangle of Tikrit-Ar Ramadi-Baquba.

There has been no evidence so far that these cadres have central direction, although US commanders have said that they seem to have some degree of regional coordination. They seem to operate largely as dispersed cells of 10-12 men, but also pay Iraqi young men to carry out attacks. There also seem to be separate groups of Islamist volunteers, some from outside Iraq, and some of the violence comes from Iraqis angered by US raids into their towns or cities or reacting out of revenge to casualties in their extended families.

The end result is a localized series of clashes and battles in Central Iraq that, so far, have allowed the U.S. forces in the north, and U.S. Marines and British forces in the south, to avoid serious clashes. It is also a struggle, however, in which the U.S. must simultaneously try to secure its presence in the region where combat is taking place, find and defeat an enemy that is hard to define and locate in the area where combat is taking

place, carry out “armed nation building,” and try to win the support, or at least tolerance, of the Iraqi people.

This “war after the war” is also being fought out on a far broader level than can be measured in terms of the clash of the day, the result of the Saddam Hussein hunt, or the number of U.S. casualties. There is no way to know the exact motives and plans of the hostile pro-Ba’ath/Saddam forces, and some of the violence is coming from foreign volunteers and Islamist extremist groups which ultimately have different motives and goals.

It is clear, however, that the attacks on U.S. and other friendly forces are so persistent that they are almost certainly directed at creating a cumulative pattern of images and level of casualties that might lead Americans to cease supporting the U.S. intervention in Iraq.

At the same time, the “war after the war” involves a combination of violence against other targets, and sabotage and theft, that is being used to undermine or block the nation building effort, prevent Iraqis from being willing to support the U.S.-led nation building effort, and distance or alienate as much of the Iraqi people from the U.S. and its allies as possible.

Hostile Iraqi Tactics

The means involved keep changing with time as the Iraqis hostile to the use force learn from experience, and react to US raids and counterstrikes. It is clear, however, that the fighting involves the following measures:

- Seeking to provoke the U.S. into security actions that will make Iraqis angry and hostile and to drive ordinary Iraqis into confrontations with U.S. troops that cause armed clashes that get broad media coverage and lead to revenge killings or attacks.
- Exploiting a critical mistake made by ORHA and carried on by the CPA by creating U.S. security zones around U.S. headquarters in central Baghdad. This has created a no go zone for Iraqis and has allowed the attackers to push the U.S. into a fortress that tends to separate U.S. personnel from the Iraqis. This follows a broader pattern where terrorist know that attacks tend to push the U.S. into locating in “force protection” enclaves and cut Americans off from the local population.
- Making steadily more sophisticated use of improvised explosive devices to conduct remote attacks on U.S. forces, nation builders, and friendly Iraqis in ways that allow the attackers to avoid being killed by U.S. troops.
- Mortars are available for longer-range attacks. The use of grenades and tape grenades in cans of gasoline allow close-in attacks with little visible warning the attacker is armed, while the tape grenades in gasoline act as timed firebombs.

- Conducting better planned and more sophisticated urban and road movement ambushes with RPGs to create a constant low-level threat and separate the U.S. forces and nation builders from the Iraqis.
- Using sabotage and theft to try to cripple the nation building effort, particularly in terms of utilities, schools, urban government centers, water, and petroleum facilities. It is unclear that the attackers yet understand that one of their successes is the growing cost such efforts have, but it is clear that they do see such attacks as a key means of making the Iraqi people hostile to the U.S. and its allies, and limiting the political chances of the Iraqis willing to form a new government.
- Killing and intimidation of Iraqis actively willing to cooperate with the U.S. and its allies, and of “informers.”
- Exploiting Islam, Iraqi nationalism, and Arab identity as political and propaganda weapons. At least tacitly trying to make the Shi’ite-Sunni dominated Council and support of the U.S. seem “appeasers” or “traitors.”
- Circulating conspiracy theories – like claims US troops wear “X-ray sunglasses” to discredit the US and increase hostility to the US.
- Manipulating religious symbols like mosques to try to provide US attacks or confrontations that can be called anti-Islamic. Manipulating pro-Islamic groups to gain their support for Ba’ath/pro-Saddam action against the US.
- Using youth gangs and other groups to destroy US civic action programs like creating soccer fields, fixing schools, etc. at night
- Broadening attacks to hit at non-U.S. targets like NGO personnel, the Jordanian Embassy, etc. This forces the U.S. to broaden its security coverage, tends to exclude civilians and NGOs from nation building activity in threatened areas, and impacts heavily on the political activity of Arab and foreign nations.
- Attacking or provoking attacks in urban areas where a US response is likely to lead to clashes or confrontations that provoke, wound, or kill Iraqi civilians. Carrying out attacks on US and allied targets that kill Iraqi civilians believing the US will often get the blame for a lack of protection.
- Using large stockpiles of explosives, arms, and bomb-making materials dispersed before the war to create a diverse pattern of attacks that becomes more effective as the attackers gain experience.
- Smuggling oil or otherwise becoming involved in theft and looting to gain revenue.

- Paying or inciting young men not directly tied to the Ba'ath or Saddam's security and paramilitary groups to carry out attacks so that key cadres are not put at risk.
- Exploiting media coverage wherever possible by sending tapes to Arab broadcast media, inciting or leading groups of young men to demonstrate against the U.S., locating attacks in crowded or urban areas where civilian casualties are likely to be caused as the U.S. reacts.
- Planting agitators to manipulate crowds in front of the media, or provide a reaction/sound bite in English or foreign language
- Using media coverage of the attacks as a means of coordinating follow-on attacks and knowing what methods are providing successful and to have the most media impact.

US Tactics and Countermeasures

The U.S., in turn, has come to realize that it is fighting a guerrilla conflict. It has responded by steadily improving its intelligence gathering activities, stepping up its raids and counterattacks, establishing tactics and rules of engagement that limit the risk of clashes and civilian casualties, and trying to accelerate the delivery of nation-building services, and immediate aid and relief. It is attempting to rush the creation of Iraqi security forces to take over much of the burden of day-to-day security and accelerate the creation of an Iraqi government at the national and local level.

US tactics are evolving with time:

- More and more weight is given to hunting down Iraqi hostiles in ways that do not confront or provoke Iraqi civilians, and limit collateral damage and civilian casualties.
- Going from a reactive mode, waiting for events and then trying to counter threats, to constant patrols and seeking to prevent attacks while establishing a deterrent presence.
- US patrols, guards, and the overall US presence is being adjusted to lower its profile, avoid confrontation in sensitive areas, and focus on protecting critical areas.
- Creating local intelligence networks using sympathetic Iraqis and rewards to try to create an effective HUMINT network in hostile areas.
- Seeking to bring allied forces into largely secure areas to allow the US to concentrate its forces on hostile areas.

- Rotating out US heavy forces for lighter US forces better suited to anti-guerilla operations and low intensity combat.
- Shifting UAV and helicopter use, and the focus of the imagery and SIGINT effort, to better support operations against Iraqi hostiles.
- Improved convoy protection and use of high-speed movement to reduce vulnerability to attacks and ambushes.
- Seeking to reduce the predictability of US movements and activities to complicate the planning of Iraqi hostile attacks.
- The number of US patrols and raids has been sharply increased, and steadily more focused on the most hostile or high-risk areas.
- Adjusting rules of engagement to try to limit the risk of excessive force or damage to Iraqi civilians.
- The planning of raids is being steadily improved to reduce the risk of provoking confrontations with Iraqi civilians.
- More use is being made of Special Forces and Rangers with helicopter support to increase the speed of reaction; efforts are being made to block off the area where the raid is actually taking place to reduce an Iraqi civilian presence on the ground and the risk sympathetic Iraqis can be provoked into a clash with US troops. Refocus of Task Force 20 from finding WMD to counter-Iraqi hostile actions.
- Providing more guards and better security for high value areas like infrastructure, power, water, petroleum, etc.
- Rushing in nation building funds and activity into areas where this can do most to counter the Iraqi opposition.
- Increasing efforts to rely on Iraqi local authorities for security and nation-building, and to rush the creation of Iraqi civil defense and security forces to reduce the confrontational presence of US troops.
- Hiring civilian and contract guards to reduce the need for US forces and their provocative impact.
- Funding discretionary rapid civic action and aid projects to win hearts and minds.
- Focusing on the restoration of security, utilities, medical services, and education.

- Creating jobs for Iraqis as part of the nation building effort, shifting purchases to local rather than imported buys, providing relief payments to Iraqis, including ex-soldiers.
- Creating a structure of rewards designed to gain intelligence and help target and capture key opposition leaders.
- Rapid payment of blood money and compensation for collateral damage and Iraqi civilian casualties.
- Giving high priority to capturing or killing key Ba'ath figures like Saddam, Uday, and Qusay to deprive the opposition movement of its political credibility and convince Iraqis they do not need to fear the return of the old regime.
- US forces are being given more training and indoctrination in security duties and politically sensitive low-intensity combat tactics.
- Seeking to compensate for the near total failure to create an effective information and media system to reach out the Iraqi people by creating an effective radio and television system and free press, although such efforts have had negligible success as of early July 2003.
- Accelerating the role and visibility of Iraqis in nation-building and key activities like deciding on the future of the Iraq petroleum industry to reduce hostility based on nationalism, fear of neoimperialism, and resulting from conspiracy theories.
- Announcing what could be a quick constitutional fast track to the restoration of Iraqi sovereignty with a new constitution followed by rapid elections.
- Giving a large role to Iraqi clergy and religious figures in nation building.
- Gradually adjusting the Deba'athification effort to exclude fewer potential leaders.

The Outcome to Date

At this point in time, the cost of the initial US failure to create effective plans for conflict termination and nation building is perhaps the most important lesson of the war. Some form of the "war after the war" was probably inevitable, but every US, allied, and Iraqi casualty since late April is to some extent the fault of inadequate military preparation for the tasks at hand, failure of the nation-building and security planning within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and a failure to force interagency coordination between key Departments like the State Department and the Department of Defense on the part of the National Security Council and the White House.

The current struggle is one that the US should at least have been able to minimize and be well on the path to decisively winning. In practice, the US effort is gathering a

momentum that it should have begun with, but it still is not clear which side is winning or losing, or even whether today's Iraqi adversaries will be the dominant adversaries in the future. Even the impact of some key potential future developments like the arrest or killing of Saddam Hussein cannot be predicted with any confidence.

The US has made significant progress in capturing senior Ba'ath/pro-Saddam leaders, and it has seized large numbers of arms and explosives. The flow of aid and nation-building activity is also gathering momentum. Many of the US security and nation building activities have been slow to gather momentum, however, because of the lack of meaningful preparation and planning by the Office of the Secretary of Defense before, during, and immediately after the war, and the failure of the US military to plan for conflict termination and the risk of looting and "postwar" Ba'ath and pro-Saddam resistance.

No clear reductions have yet occurred in casualties or the pattern of violence, however, and it is far from clear which side is winning the battle for Iraqi hearts and minds in hostile areas. The size of the de facto "no go" areas seems to be increasing and it is not clear that aid, nation building, and efforts to shift power to friendly Iraqis are really catching on in hostile areas. The level of tension between US forces and the CPA, and Sunni Iraqis in Baghdad and the Sunni triangle also seems to be increasing.

The Ba'ath/pro-Saddam forces have a vast pool of resources to draw upon in terms of hidden weapons and explosives, and capturing past leaders may or may not discourage tens of thousands of core loyalists, particularly when new leaders almost certainly are emerging and the motivation is at least as much nationalism, Arab identity and religion as any loyalty to Saddam.

Possible Scenarios for the "War After the War," and Possible End Games

It does seem fair to say, however, that the outcome now in doubt, that both sides will make further changes in their tactics and targets, and that there is good reason to assume that the present war after the war could be only the prelude to a very different type of conflict.

The present fighting could be terminated in a few months – or no later than late Spring 2004 -- in the best-case scenario. However, it could also grow much worse or take on an entirely different form. The range of possible scenarios illustrates both the uncertainties involved and the reasons to look deeper into what is happening and find better ways to analyze and report on the conflict.

- **Best Case: Rapid U.S. Victory:** The present security measures defeat a Ba'ath/pro-Saddam force that cannot gather broad active support even among Iraqi Shi'ites in areas like the Sunni triangle. The nation building effort gathers steady momentum, winning the support or at least tolerance of the vast Shi'ite majority (60%+ of the population), and the Kurds reach a reasonable modus vivendi with the Arab and Turkomans in the north. Oil production and exports are

restored on terms clearly beneficial to the Iraqis, and utilities, water, education and security are established in Shi'ite, Kurdish, and friendly Sunni areas and gradually in the present hostile and no-go areas. The constitution is created on federalist and pluralistic terms the key Iraqi factions can accept, the economy is gradually restored, and the US and its allies turn sovereignty back to the Iraqis

- **Lingering Ba'athist Conflict:** The US largely defeats the present pro-Ba'ath/pro-Saddam cadres, but key elements remain. They are joined by Sunni Islamists – some from outside Iraq, and Sunnis who see power shifting to the Shi'ites and Kurds. Many Sunni areas remain hostile and virtual no go areas. Sporadic violence and sabotage continue at low levels. This violence is low enough to appear to be quasi-victory for the US, but creates a time bomb in terms of internal Iraqi instability that divides and destabilizes the country when US and allied forces leave. The problem is solved by a return to strong man rule or simply is not solve at all – leaving a long heritage of ethnic and religious division.
- **Sunni Islamic Conflict/Sunni Resentment and Separatism:** The broad level of Sunni hostility to the US becomes much sharper, much more quickly, because of a few politically sensitive clashes and US mistakes in dealing with the situation. Baghdad, with over four million people, becomes largely hostile to the US in Sunni areas. Nation building and security efforts either fail in the Sunni triangle, or simply lock down a hostile population. The high profile, known Ba'athist/pro-Saddam leaders are replaced by scattered cells of near and experience fighters who are far more nationalist, Sunni sectarian, and Islamist. Outside movements like Al Qaeda acquire steadily growing influence. Every adaptation in US tactics breeds a counter-adaptation in Sunni tactics, and violence is constant and adequate to seriously impede or block much of the nation building effort.
- **Failed Nation Building:** Regardless of the military situation, the Iraqis cannot agree on a workable and stable form of federalism, protection of ethnic and sectarian rights, and division of oil revenues. The image of a political system may disguise the lack of a stability reality or lead to open factional ethnic and sectarian violence. The US and allied occupation limits the scale of conflict only as long as it is present. No true rule of law is established and key uncertainties remain about the role of the Sunni and Shi'ite clergy, secularism vs. Islam, and secular law vs. Sharia.
- **Failed Economy:** Just as many aspects of nation building can fail almost regardless of the outcome of the present fighting with the pro-Ba'ath, pro-Saddam faction, so can the Iraqi economy. The US has not yet set clear goals for forgiveness of more than \$200 billion in Iraqi debt and reparations or for renegotiating Saddam's contingency contracts for oil development, and certainly has no clear plan to achieve such goals. Iraq population growth will take it from 25 million to at least 36 million by 2020, and quite possibly to 39 million. No projected level of oil export earnings can bring a population this large wealth even by the standards of 1980, and a population with no experience with modern

financial institutions, a crippled and chronically mismanaged agricultural sector, service industries two decades out of date, and inefficient state industries oriented toward military production fails to properly diversify, create the necessary scale of new jobs, and properly distribute income, The scale of US and other foreign aid, and financial relief, is too limited, too short, and too badly implemented to succeed, and give Iraqi economic stability.

- **Shi'ite Separatism and Conflict:** The vacuum of experience political leadership in the Shi'ite majority, the clergy's desire for some form of Islamic rule, and the search for power by young radical Shi'ite Islamists creates a movement or movements that will not accept federalism on terms that Sunnis and Kurds find acceptable. The failures in the US and British nation building and security efforts in the south gradually turn tolerance into hostility. This is compounded by economic problems and failures in the nation building effort, particularly by tensions between the secular outside Shi'ite opposition leaders and the religious Shi'ites. The result is gradual violence and attacks on the occupying forces. Some form of informal alliance occurs between Sunni and Shi'ite hostile factions. Syria and Iran offer some form of support.
- **Kurdish-Arab-Turkoman Tension in the North:** The thin veneer of democratic pluralism among the Kurds that papers over the divisions between Barzani and Talibani gradually erodes and smuggling and oil for food cease to give both factions the money they want and need to maintain power. Internal feuding and grasping for money and power interacts with growing tensions between Kurd, Turkoman, and Arab. The north gradually becomes unstable with Arabs and Turcomans becoming actively hostile to the US as the ally of the Kurds. Informal alliances develop between hostile Arab factions in the North and hostile factions in the center.
- **Forced U.S./British Handoff:** The scale of conflict in the "war after the war" and the clear failure of nation-building reach the point where they make it clear that the US and its allies simply cannot win the peace. A cosmetic effort is made to internationalize the departure of the occupying forces, the Iraqis, the region, and the world perceives the US and allied departure as a defeat. The US loses the war by losing the peace.
- **Post US Departure Collapse and Conflict:** For any combination of the above reasons, Iraq either becomes unstable or reverts to strong man rule after the departure of the US and its allies. The end result is not an example of anything other than a failed war and failed nation building. The end result is new Kurdish separatism and either Shi'ite domination with a high degree of religious character or a reassertion of Sunni control under a new Saddam Hussein.

There are several points that must be stressed about this list. The first is that while the best case or victory scenario is only one case on this list, it may well be the most likely endgame. Second, cases other than the best case are not likely to be the extreme version

of any of the other cases on this list. Third, no one can possibly predict at this point what combination of developments will actually take place.

Finally, and most important, what all of the cases have in common is that nation building and tactical victory are only at best a means to an end. It is the mix of Iraqi perceptions of what is happening – and particularly the breadth and depth of Iraqi support for US-led security and nation-building efforts – that will ultimately determine the end game.

Phrases like “winning the battle for hearts and minds” became an ironic joke in Vietnam. That is not, however, because this was not the critical battle. It is rather because the US created a mix of illusions that first led it to believe it was winning this battle, and then created a climate where it systematically lied to itself about what was happening. In practice, the US military and US government were decisively defeated by North Vietnam and Vietnam in the one battle that really counted while winning virtually every military encounter.

Problems in Current Official and Media Reporting on the Conflict

Anyone can sit in an armchair at a distance some 7,000 miles from Iraq and make summary prophecies about the extent to which each side is winning or losing the present struggle and the nature of future scenarios. The problem is that such analysis is simply guesswork without far more data than are currently available.

As for those actually in Iraq, it is already clear from talking to such personnel and that it is easy to become so concerned with day-to-day developments, ideology, and long term goals for nation-building that the patterns emerging in the “war after the war” become lost.

The reporting coming out of the U.S. government from USCENTCOM and the Department of Defense presents serious problems because it fails to cover many critical aspects of the fighting. There are, in fact, striking resemblances between what U.S. official sources are saying and what most media are reporting in this low-level conflict and what happened during pre-Tet days in Vietnam. An operational “can do” mentality is necessary for U.S. success. So is victory in day-to-day battles, but if this becomes the central focus – as it did in Vietnam and Somalia – it is also a good way to lose the “war after the war.”

At the same time, media coverage has a manic depressive character and swings from depression to exultation by the day. This is particularly true when major incidents like the death of Uday and Qusay are interpreted as “victories” or “turning points,” or “defeats” like the bombing of the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad dominate the news.

- The bad news is dominated by U.S. body counts of soldiers killed in combat and dramatic incidents like the embassy bombing

- The good news is dominated by generalized statements that the enemy is being defeated, successful clashes, and dramatic incidents like the killing of Qusay and Uday. It is mixed in when reports of the numbers of patrols, the number of weapons seizures, and the number captured and detained. (The enemy body counts of Vietnam have been replaced with more politically correct, but largely meaningless, data similar to the drug bust/amount of drugs seized in reporting on the war on drugs.)

The end result is a combination of official and media reporting that does not provide an adequate picture of what is happening and key trends – partly because the U.S. is not providing and partly because the media does not seem to be reporting in depth.

What It Would Take To Understand Which Scenario is Likely and Whether the U.S. is Winning or Losing

No war is ever the subject of perfect analysis, either within government or outside it. The U.S. and other countries do, however, have enough experience with past guerrilla operations and nation building efforts to know what kind of reporting and analysis is useful to plan, manage, and reporting on the nature of the conflict.

An accurate assessment of the “war after the war” would require the following kind of data and reporting to provide a clear picture of what is happening:

- **A picture of the quality of U.S. intelligence** and how much it is improving over time, coupled to some trends in how much useful intelligence is being volunteered by Iraqis. Intelligence is the key to defeating the overall structure of anti-U.S. activity. Launching lots of raids, seizing lots of arms, and arresting lots of people comes under the heading of “rounding up the usual suspects.” The issue is whether intelligence is good enough so such activity has serious value.
- **A count and mapping of known attempted attacks and sabotage incidents by type and cause**, not just reports of those that produce visible clashes and casualties. It is the patterns, location, and frequency of known attempts at violence and blocking nation building – not successes or violent incidents – that reveal the patterns in the war. It should be noted that in past wars, it has been very important to keep track of both the frequency and seriousness of attacks in terms of their political and economic impact as well as casualties because historically there often is no correlation between the number of attempts and the seriousness of the result.
- **One key area of attention should be increases in area** – particularly areas involving Shi’ite hostility or destabilizing clashes between Kurds, Arabs, and Turkomans – as these are key warnings the struggle is expanding and becoming more serious.

- **A count and mapping of successful attacks and sabotage incidents by type and cause.** Successful attacks do matter more than attempts, and it is particularly critical to see the overall pattern, not just high profile incidents. This is particularly true when it comes to assessing what the attackers are really attempting to do, and in understanding the extent to which they are able or unable to spread their geographic range, bring in areas less loyal to Saddam, and block or limit progress in nation building. One of the most critical failures in media coverage of the war is the failure to actually map what is going on and to tie together attacks on U.S. soldiers with the overall attempt to block nation building and alienate Iraqis from the U.S.-led effort by CPA.
- **Mapping of “no go” and unsecure areas and areas turned over to Iraqis for security control:** “Victory” for the opponents of the U.S. consists in part in the ability to either deny large areas to the U.S. and its allies or limit activity to hostile U.S. or allied patrols. These are difficult maps to draw historically because there is so much pressure on units in the field to report success. The situation is also complicated by the fact that turning areas over to the Iraqis for security activity often coincides with areas too hostile or angry for U.S. operations. This can be solved, however, by creating overlapping maps. Once again, increases in area – particularly areas involving Shi’ite hostility or destabilizing clashes between Kurds, Arabs, and Turkomans – are key warnings the struggle is expanding and becoming more serious.
- **A break down of casualties that reveals patterns, not just the number of U.S. dead:** The present casualty counts focus almost solely on U.S. military killed, with occasional counts if seriously wounded. These counts present major problems in terms of understanding what is actually happening. They may be convenient for U.S. PAOs, because they minimize the political backlash by underreporting, but they simply do not provide the data needed.

What are needed are chronological counts (and charts and maps) of the following:

- All U.S. wounded, not simply wounded requiring major medical treatment.
- Casualties from accidents clearly related to security procedures like high-speed convoys, etc. The present “non-combat” counts understate what is happening.
- Casualties from foreign civilians, NGOs and nation builders, and non-U.S. forces. It should be obvious that Iraqi hostiles will make such “soft targets” a priority both to block support for nation building and to both avoid improving U.S. force protection and stretch U.S. forces thinner in trying to protect more targets.

- Counts of Iraqi friendlies supporting the U.S. that are killed and wounded. These casualties are as important to U.S. success in nation building and security as U.S. casualties.
- Counts of Iraqi civilians (neutrals) supporting the U.S. that are killed and wounded. Such counts should clearly distinguish whether hostile or U.S. forces did the killing, and are a critical measure of probably popular hostility and the growth or non-growth or hostile areas.
- Counts of Iraqi hostiles by type – a clear distinction between Ba'ath/Saddam supporters, outside volunteers, Sunni Islamists, revenge/anger hostiles, Shi'ites, and other ethnic/sectarian groups
- **A running report on theft and sabotage:** Sabotage, theft, and looting are not always related, but they are in at least some critical cases. It is becoming clearer and clearer that at least some looting and theft is timed and organized to paralyze the nation building effort. It is equally clear that successful sabotage of major infrastructure and nation building activity, and constant low-level efforts, are as important in denying the U.S. success, and in increasing the hostility of the Iraqi people, as casualties. One truly critical question is where most of the stolen goods are going – a question most media reports fail to ask.
- Once again, it is critical to map what is happening be able to look at the overall pattern to see what areas are affected, and particularly whether patterns emerge in preventing the restoration of oil production and exports, water and utilities, and normal activity in economic terms or the ability to run schools. The Iraqis hostile to the U.S.-led effort almost certainly see the “war after the war” as a battle of attrition in which using these methods to alienate Iraqis from the U.S. is as important as trying to keep the casualty count high enough to try to make Americans sick of the war.
- **Careful monitoring of developments in the North, Shi'ite areas, and Sunni Areas Outside Baghdad and the “Sunni Triangle.”** It may well be that the U.S. cannot really lose the “war after the war” unless it loses the Shi'ite areas in the south and in and around Baghdad. It is hard to see how Sunni Arab and Saddam/Ba'ath loyalists can “win” in a limited area which so far has 8-12% of the population, and when the Shi'ites, Kurds, and others with at least 80% of the population are not violently hostile to the U.S., and move forwards towards nation building.
- **Reporting meaningful success:** Measurements of military activity are necessarily largely negative. They focus on the areas where there is fighting, sabotage, and hostility. It is equally important, however, to measure the level of success in creating some form of security and in nation building.

Here it is important to note that most U.S. and CPA statements to date consist of broad statistical trends like level of power restored, etc. These are not coupled to maps, and often have no specifics. Most to date have been totally unrelated to success in terms of the “war after the war.” In fact, no report I know of from the Office of the Secretary of Defense or CPA has gone beyond the kind of similar generalities made during the Vietnam War.

Meaningful reporting on success would have to include:

- Maps of secure and “can go” areas showing growth or contraction over time. Such maps need to cover key urban areas and sub-regions, not simply all of Iraq. They should be validated by running casualty and sabotage counts to show if they are really secure.
- Progress in establishing peaceful and/or friendly local governments at the national, province, and local level.
- Progress by city and area in establishing functioning Iraqi security forces.
- Progress by city and area in allowing U.S. forces and CPA officials to operate without being in high security force protection areas.
- Progress by city and area in establishing functioning schools and hospitals. Iraqi security forces.
- Progress maps, with measures of capacity relative to need, in restoring and security key petroleum and oil export facilities.
- Progress maps, with measures of capacity relative to need, showing the development of utility grids for water and power.
- Maps of economic restoration in terms of secure roads and markets, and local employment/unemployment data.
- Functioning financial institution maps showing the number of working and secure banks.
- Progress maps of safe NGO/contractor/civilian nation-builder areas showing whether military security activity is not needed or can be reduced to the presence level.

Looking Towards the Future

It must be stressed that the US still has a decisive edge in resources and many opportunities. It is far from clear that any of the massive interagency problems between State, DoD, and the NSC that led to much of the present “war after the war” have been

solved. The leadership of the military and security effort in Iraq does, however, have far more realism than immediately after the war, the US military is reacting to its serious failures to prepare for conflict termination and nation building, and a major flow of resources is moving into Iraq.

It is still more than possible that the U.S. faces a pro-Saddam/Ba'ath Sunni threat that is local enough, and limited enough in terms of leadership and support, that the “war after the war” will be won by current levels of activity over the next few months. If so, victory will speak for itself and many of the reporting systems described above will prove unnecessary and be made obsolete by that victory.

It is also impossible to tell how much of this analysis is already being carried out at a classified level, and what the results are to date, from what USCENTCOM, the CPA, and U.S. officials have said at an unclassified level. The U.S. military and U.S. officials may be operating from a far better information base than they wish to make public.

At the same time, the history of nation building is discouraging, in part because it is often approached in a climate of illusions and good intentions where those involved failed to honestly measure and address their successes and failures. The history of nation building is particularly discouraging where it has had to be attempted in a climate of violence. In most such cases in the past, those involved in the mix of warfighting and nation building failed to systematically address the issues and risks involved, They also began to lie to themselves and failed to honestly address the complexity of what had to be done, the full range of problems in security, and the need for honest measures of success. Even where such efforts were successful, they usually became successful because those involved in the security and nation-building efforts learned the hard way and became grimly realistic over time.

Vietnam, Lebanon, Haiti, the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Somalia are all warnings of what can happen in Iraq. At present, there are many scattered indicators – good and bad – of how the “war after the war” is playing out, and of what may happen in the future. There is, however, no public reporting from the U.S. government that provides enough detail to make valid judgments, and there does seem to be a risk that the lack of adequate planning and organization for nation building and conflict termination before and after the war may lead the CPA and USCENTCOM to ignore the need to establish adequate systems for planning and analysis after the fact.

Certainly, media reporting on the situation in Iraq does not cover most of the areas described above, in part because it simply is unrealistic to expect reporters to acquire and analyze the necessary volume of data. It also is difficult enough to have to cover the crisis of the day without having deal with the complex issues necessary to understand what is happening. The danger for the U.S. with this situation is that it does not prepare either the media or the American public to deal with more extended wars or major, catastrophic, hostile attacks. It also tends to polarize Americans politically and in making military judgments into “optimists” and “pessimists” neither of which have enough facts to make such judgments.

If the US achieves a short-term victory, these problems in shaping American and global perceptions of the “war after the war” do not matter. If, however, any of the moiré extend conflict scenarios occur, then losing the battle for accurate and informed American perceptions can be as important losing the battle for Iraqi perceptions. It can create many of the same attitudes and frustrations that led to U.S. withdrawal from Lebanon and Somalia, and effectively lose both the peace and the war.