Airpower, Counterinsurgency, the Use of Civilians as Weapons, and "Decisive" Force

By Anthony H. Cordesman

Last Updated: 2018
Please provide comments to acordesman@gmail.com

Credits: Photo: ALBERTO PIZZOLI/AFP/Getty Images
Airpower, Counterinsurgency, the Use of Civilians as Weapons, and "Decisive" Force

Anthony H. Cordesman

1. Set a clear grand strategic goal.
2. Civilian dimension is just as important to choosing to engage, how to fight, and how to exist as military dimension.
3. Engage immediately at levels that can be decisive or limit/end the engagement.
4. Contain and deter where “victory”
5. Avoid open ended commitments to optional wars.
6. Do not commit major U.S. forces to optional wars.
7. Build-up host country forces as soon as possible.
8. Provide forward train and assist teams.
9. Use airpower to give host country group forces the edge.
10. Focus on the net human impact over time, not minor tactical limits on civilian casualties.

The U.S. has now been fighting for seventeen years in Afghanistan, as well as spent some fifteen years fighting a mix of "long wars" in Iraq and Syria. In the process, it has gradually evolved a new approach to fighting such wars that combines the use of advanced air-launched precision strike systems and advanced intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (IS&R) systems, with the use of small numbers of U.S. special forces and train and assist advisors on the ground to give host country strategic partners the ability to defeat insurgent and extremist forces at the tactical level.

As is Vietnam, however, it is unclear that these tactical defeats can lead to any kind of stable victory that can prevent insurgent forces from surviving, exploiting the political and other weaknesses of the strategic partners the U.S. is seeking to aid, and creating any kind of stable favorable outcome in the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. The ability to win tactical clashes does not produce favorable strategic outcomes, much less any form of victory in the form of a lasting defeat or the enemy or stable peace.

Again as in Vietnam, a long-series of tactical defeats of insurgent forces in both wars has not compensated for poor host country leadership and governance at the civil level. "Failed states" can "win" tactical encounters but lack the ability to unify and win enough hearts and minds to "hold" and secure space and "build" public support and civil success.

At the same time, threat forces have adapted and found ways to limit the effectiveness of the new U.S. approach. Terrorist/extremist/insurgent forces have steadily improved their ability to disperse, hide, and use civilians as shields against air and other precision strike systems. So far, they have been able to engage the U.S. and its strategic partners in wars of attrition where it is unclear that consistent US and allied individual tactical victories really matter.

Even when force is decisive at the tactical level, it is not decisive at the strategic level, and offers no clear path to a stable peace at the grand strategic level. This raises a number of critical challenges for U.S. strategic planning and warfighting -- particularly in an era where the threat of extremist and terrorist movements continues to grow on a global level.

Looking at the evolving challenges the U.S faces, they include:
• How to address the use of civilians as shields and weapons? What limits on the use of force should the U.S. apply, and how can the U.S. calculate the cost-benefits of inflicting direct civilian casualties in decisive strikes relative to the cost to civilians of prolonged conflicts.

• How to achieve meaningful tactical victories in a strategic sense? Can the present precision air/ground train and assist approach be adapted to secure territory and inflict lasting strategic defeats at a reasonable level of time and cost?

• Can the U.S. to adapt such tactics to successfully fight such wars when --as in Syria -- there is no guarantee of air superiority and freedom of action in air-to-ground strikes?

• Or, if one examines the causes of the Russian defeat in Afghanistan, can the U.S. adapt such tactics to face threat forces are armed with effective light air defenses -- and/ or now well as their own missiles, UAVs, and UCAVs?

• Even if the U.S. can succeed at the military level, can the U.S. also find ways to succeed in fighting the civil half of such wars, and what are the civil conditions that should determine whether U.S forces should support weakly governed, and deeply divided "failed states."

The answers to all of these challenges are far from clear. So far, the U.S. has shown its new tactics can allow the U.S. to sustain wars of attrition indefinitely in Afghanistan, and largely defeat an insurgency at the tactical level in Iraq/Syria. It has not shown that it has the capability to win a lasting victory at either the military or civil level.

The Limited Window of Precision Strike Superiority: 1990-2005

Even the most advanced military technologies and tactics tend have a limited time window before opponents find suitable counters. If one looks back at America's wars from Vietnam to the present, the outcome of air/ground combat has been shaped by the emergence of airpower, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (IS&R) as steadily improving ways to carry out precision strike both in the form of immediate combat support and strikes through the threat of operations based on steadily improving near real time targeting capability. This has allowed the U.S. to sharply improve its air-land warfare capabilities, and sharply reduce its ground presence, but it has not enabled U.S. victory in any lasting grand strategic sense.

In retrospect, precision strike and IS&R capabilities were too limited at the time of the Vietnam to have a decisive tactical effect, and did not really shape the outcome of a conflict until the first Gulf War in 1990-1991. Problems in IS&R capabilities against disperse combat forces, the narrow weather and light windows for strikes against fixed targets, and effective land-based air defenses all combined to limit the impact of the initial generation of precision air strike systems through the end of the U.S. combat role in Vietnam.

Major advances did take place between Vietnam and the 1990-1991 Gulf War. In 1991, a preliminary strategic bombing campaign, coupled to near real time “deep strike” capabilities provided U.S. and allied armor forces with a decisive edge over Iraqi conventional forces at every level from attacks on enemy supplies and infrastructure to attacking maneuver forces in the rear and providing close air support.

U.S. ground forces were far superior to Iraqi ground combat capability in 1990-1991, but the U.S. was able to gain and exploit a decisive lead in airpower and precision strike capability compared
to Iraq's limited air, land-based air defense, and missile forces. Postwar analysis by US Air Force Studies and Analysis did sharply reduce some wartime claims about the success of U.S. precision strike capability, but confirmed that airpower gave U.S.-led forces a decisive new edge in joint warfare that had great strategic and tactical benefits.

The U.S. and its allies were able to repeat this experience in joint warfare when they invaded Iraq in 2003. Once again, Iraqi conventional forces were outclassed on the ground, but could not begin to cope with the almost total air superiority available to US led forces both in the air and in joint warfare. While postwar analyses by Air Force Studies and Analysis again led to revision in some initial claims -- and precision strike capabilities were still limited by the slower pace of evolution in the capabilities in IS&R capability, total air superiority had a massive impact on the outcome in fighting a largely conventional enemy.

Precision strike capability also had a major impact on other kinds of war. U.S. airpower and precision strike capability gave a combination of Afghan Northern Alliance forces and a small number of Special Forces advisors a decisive advantage over the Taliban in 2001. U.S. airpower – largely targeted by small teams of U.S. ground forces. Northern Alliance forces were on the edge of defeat when the U.S. intervened in the fighting, but Taliban collapsed in the face of precision airstrikes.

**Threats Begin to Adapt**

During 2003-2011, however, the U.S. was unable to find ways to create effective civil governance and leadership in either Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria – once a major civil war began in that country. U.S. and allied efforts in political reform, governance reform, and economic aid had only limited success, and did not lead to effective governance in Afghanistan or Iraq, or begin create an effective civil alternative in Syria once a civil war began in that country.

The U.S. was also critically slow to react to the initial emergence of new threats in Afghanistan and Iraq and to focus on developing effective host country forces. When it did react, it found that even combinations of major U.S. ground forces, and far more sophisticated mixes of IS&R and precision strikes could not prevent or defeat the rise of a major insurgency and extremist threat – although they could play a critical role in helping ground forces to defeat insurgents and extremists in tactical clashes and decisively tip the balance in urban warfare.

The first challenges in Afghanistan emerged even before the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Even though the Taliban and Al Qaida were effectively defeated in Afghanistan, they soon found a de facto sanctuary they could use to rebuild their operations in Pakistan. In 2002-2003, the Taliban and other extremists also began to re-engage in Afghanistan in ways that allowed them to learn how to disperse and shift to using insurgent tactics.

**Figure One** shows that by 2005, NATO ISAF reporting on the emerging threat indicated the Taliban and other insurgents were exploiting their sanctuary in Pakistan to train significant guerrilla and counterinsurgency forces, some of which now operated from with Afghanistan. By 2008, the Taliban had become a major threat. The U.S. and NATO allied forces could still defeat them in tactical clashes using their superior ground weapons and precision air strike, but not stop them from steadily expanding their areas of influence and ability to carry out bombings and attacks in Afghan cities.

The U.S. and its allies, however, were slow to try to create effective Afghan military forces. They tended to see the Taliban as too extreme and unpopular to create a serious insurgency, and the fact
they could win tactical clashes tended to lead them to underestimate the expansion of Taliban influence and the rising threat.

In Iraq, the Coalition Provisional Authority, which was led by the U.S., issued Order Number 2: Dissolution of Entities, and disbanded the Iraqi military, security, and intelligence services on May 23, 2003. The police services had little or no paramilitary capability, and this meant the U.S. and its allies had to only real security forces left in country. At the same time, Iraq's lack of effective governance and political unity led to a Shiite-dominated government and process of de-Baathification that deprived Sunnis of their past power and influence. This, in turn, led the rise of Sunni versus Shiite sectarian tensions that soon created a state of irregular and "terrorist" warfare in Western Iraq and mixed areas in central and eastern Iraq.

By 2005, Sectarian tension and anger had led to the gradual creation of Sunni extremist guerilla and insurgent forces that could directly challenge the Iraqi central government in some Western cities, and that adapted their tactics and use of civilian shields and areas in ways designed to fight a war deliberately designed to cope with the tactical capabilities of U.S ground and precision-strike airpower.

In both Afghanistan and Iraq, the rise of insurgent and extremist threats continued to be empowered at the civil level by poor governance, a lack of political unity and leadership, corruption, poor economic policies, and serious sectarian and ethnic divisions. The U.S. not only found itself fight extremist insurgents, but "failed state wars" without an effective host country partner. Afghanistan had been the equivalent of a failed state since the Soviet invasion in 1979. Iraq had been in continuous crisis or conflict since it invaded Iran in 1980, and the collapse of its government and security forces in 2003 made it into a failed state as well.

A Slow U.S. Response, and Focus on U.S. and Outside Allied Forces

The initial U.S response was slow and ineffective, although a number of U.S. ambassadors and commanders requested faster and more decisive action. Figure One shows how slow the U.S. was to fund the kind of military response that was needed that the U.S. was slow to transform and build up its forces in Iraq to develop effective U.S. counterinsurgency/terrorism capabilities, and gave Iraq priority over Afghanistan in building up U.S. forces through 2009 to the point where Afghanistan had only a limited U.S. military presence. The US military manpower and funding data in Figure One show it was even slower in trying to fund efforts to try to create effective host country forces and Iraqi and afghan civil development.

U.S. efforts to deal with the civil dimension in both countries led to major U.S. political/governance and aid efforts that had mixed success at best and did little to improve the situation. At the same time, the U.S. had officially disbanded Iraqi military and security forces in 2003, and let Northern Alliance forces scatter during 2002 without creating effective Afghan national forces. It initially had no meaningful host country security partners.

The end result was that the U.S. initially lacked host country forces capable of acting as a partner and had to thrust its own and outside allied forces into counterinsurgency and training missions for which they had little experience and limited initial capability.

Efforts to create effective host country forces were particularly slow in Afghanistan. Iraq was given priority both in terms of limited financial resources and qualified trainers, in part because the U.S. recognized the worsening threat their first, and part because of its greater strategic importance and image as "US." versus "NATO" war. It also seemed easier to recruit trainable forces with higher
degrees of literacy and motivation because the extremism of Iraqi insurgent forces came to alienate many fellow Sunnis as well as create natural enemies in Iraq's Shiites and Kurds. These trends are illustrated in Figure Two.

However, the build-up in both Iraq and Afghan forces suffered from common problems that still affect Afghan and Iraqi forces to some degree:

- Rushing forces into the field, once they had completed basic unit training and formation, that had no cadres of experienced and proven officers and NCOs, experienced soldiers, and embedded, combat-proven advisors.
- Critical timing problems. In Iraq, Iraqi politics led to a situation where U.S. combat forces left in December 2011, far earlier than planned. The training effort for Iraqi forces was then suddenly cut far below the planned level, and training for the police was suddenly cancelled. In Afghanistan, President Obama decided in June 2011 to end the surge earlier than the Secretary of Defense and commander advised, and then announced on May 26 2014 that he would end the U.S. presence in December 2014 -- a decision he later had to reverse. As warned at the time, and confirmed by events since 2014, this was at least five years before Afghan forces could be credibly trained and given sufficient combat capability.1
- Recruiting in an environment where recruits often had no other source of income, and treating them as motivated volunteers.
- Not giving forces leave, and pulling them out of combat positions to regroup and recover.
- Serious internal corruption over recruiting and promotions, taking money for ghost soldiers, and sales of weapons and equipment.
- Crediting soldiers as trained regardless of actual performance in training courses.
- Ethnic, sectarian, tribal, and other internal divisions.
- Erratic, under-resourced, and changing approaches to creating police, paramilitary, and local forces.

---

1 The CRS notes that President Obama’s announced on May 27, 2014 that the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan would decrease from 33,000 to 9,800 by January 1, 2015; would halve again by January 1, 2016, to about 4,900; and be limited to an embassy presence of about 1,000 thereafter. Some unspecified number of the 60,000 U.S. troops currently providing in-theater support would remain in the region as an “enduring presence” after the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan.
Yemen - Key Civil Indicators: 1996-2017

- 5th most corrupt country in the world (175 out of 180) according to Transparency International
- 11th lowest Human Development (178th out of 189 countries) according to UN Human Development Indicator Ranking
- Gross Per Capita Income in $US Dollars, and Rank from top, in 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CIA</th>
<th>IMF</th>
<th>World Bank</th>
<th>UN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SUS</td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>SUS</td>
<td>Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominal</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- World Bank Governance Indicators: 1996-2017

Note: Comparisons of national wealth are frequently made on the basis of nominal GDP and savings (not just income), which do not reflect differences in the cost of living in different countries (see List of countries by GDP (nominal) per capita); hence, using a PPP basis is arguably more useful when comparing generalized differences in living standards between nations because PPP takes into account the relative cost of living and the inflation rates of the countries, rather than using only exchange rates, which may distort the real differences in income. This is why GDP (PPP) per capita is often considered one of the indicators of a country's standard of living, although this can be problematic because GDP per capita is not a measure of personal income. Source: Adapted from Transparency International, https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2017#table; pp. 27-29, UNDP, Human Development Indices and Indicators, United Nations, 2018 Statistical Update, pp. 27-29; Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(PPP) per capita and World Bank Governance Indicators, http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/#reports, accessed 27.9.218
Iraq - Key Civil Indicators: 1996-2017

- 11th most corrupt country in the world (169 out of 180 countries) according to Transparency International
- 69th lowest Human Development (120 out of 189 countries) according to UN Human Development Indicator Ranking
- Gross Per Capita Income in US Dollars, and Rank from top, in 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CIA</th>
<th>IMF</th>
<th>World Bank</th>
<th>UN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominal</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5,088</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>17,004</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- World Bank Governance Indicators: 1996-2017

Note: Comparisons of national wealth are frequently made on the basis of nominal GDP and savings (not just income), which do not reflect differences in the cost of living in different countries (see List of countries by GDP (nominal) per capita); hence, using a PPP basis is arguably more useful when comparing generalized differences in living standards between nations because PPP takes into account the relative cost of living and the inflation rates of the countries, rather than using only exchange rates, which may distort the real differences in income. This is why GDP (PPP) per capita is often considered one of the indicators of a country's standard of living,[2][3] although this can be problematic because GDP per capita is not a measure of personal income. Source: Adapted from Transparency International, https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2017#table; pp. 27-29, UNDP, Human Development Indices and Indicators, United Nations, 2018 Statistical Update, pp. 27-29; Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(PPP)_per_capita and World Bank Governance Indicators, http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/#reports, accessed 27.9.218
Afghanistan: Key Civil Indicators: 1996-2017

- 4th most corrupt country in the world (177 out of 180) according to Transparency International
- 21th lowest Human Development (168 out of 189) countries according to UN Human Development Indicator Ranking
- Gross Per Capita Income in $US Dollars, and Rank from top, in in 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CIA</th>
<th>IMF</th>
<th>World Bank</th>
<th>UN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$US</td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>$US</td>
<td>Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominal</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>588</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>1,889</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Governance Indicators: 1996-2017 (World Bank)

Note: Comparisons of national wealth are frequently made on the basis of nominal GDP and savings (not just income), which do not reflect differences in the cost of living in different countries (see List of countries by GDP (nominal) per capita). Hence, using a PPP basis is arguably more useful when comparing generalized differences in living standards between nations because PPP takes into account the relative cost of living and the inflation rates of the countries, rather than using only exchange rates, which may distort the real differences in income. This is why GDP (PPP) per capita is often considered one of the indicators of a country's standard of living, although this can be problematic because GDP per capita is not a measure of personal income.

Syria: Governance Indicators: 1996-2017

- 3rd most corrupt country in the world (178 out of 180) according to Transparency International
- 34th lowest Human Development (155 out of 189) countries according to UN Human Development Indicator Ranking

Gross Nominal Per Capita Income in $US Dollars, and Rank from top, in in 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CIA</th>
<th>IMF</th>
<th>World Bank</th>
<th>UN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SUS</td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>SUS</td>
<td>Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominal</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1,203 158
2,900 164

Governance Indicators: 1996-2017

Note: Comparisons of national wealth are frequently made on the basis of nominal GDP and savings (not just income), which do not reflect differences in the cost of living in different countries (see List of countries by GDP (nominal) per capita); hence, using a PPP basis is arguably more useful when comparing generalized differences in living standards between nations because PPP takes into account the relative cost of living and the inflation rates of the countries, rather than using only exchange rates, which may distort the real differences in income. This is why GDP (PPP) per capita is often considered one of the indicators of a country's standard of living, although this can be problematic because GDP per capita is not a measure of personal income.

Figure One: U.S. Military, Civil, and VA Medical Spending in the Afghan and Iraq Conflicts: FY2001-FY2015

Sharply Underfunded Civil Development in Both Iraq and Afghanistan

[Graph showing military, civil, and VA medical spending]

Figure Two: The Direct Defense and State/USAID Costs of War: 2001-FY2018

Total DoD War-Related Appropriations and Obligations from September 11, 2001 through FY 2018

DoS/USAID Enduring and OCO Funding from FY 2001-FY 2019 ($176.6 Billion Obligated FY01-FY18)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Afghanistan</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoD OCO</td>
<td>647.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State/USAID</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>367.0</td>
<td>142.7</td>
<td>330.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>1,024.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Iraq</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoD OCO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State/USAID</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Syria</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoD OCO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State/USAID</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Iraq and Syria</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoD OCO</td>
<td>753.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State/USAID</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoD OCO</td>
<td>14,000.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State/USAID</td>
<td>82.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure Four: The Emerging Taliban/Extremist Threat in Afghanistan and the Slow Creation of Creating Afghan Host Country Forces

Source: ISAF, June 2011.
Figure Five: The Emerging Threat in Iraq: Monthly Security Incidents and Civilian Fatalities - 1/2004–12/2011

Figure Six: U.S. Forces and Military Spending in the Afghan and Iraq Conflicts: 2001-2016-I

Self-Destructive Boom and Bust Build-Ups

Financing Iraq Over Afghanistan, But Iraqi Build-Up Is Still Too Slow

Sources: adapted from Amy Belasco, The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11, CRS RL33110, December 8, 2014, pp. 9, 15.
Regional Boom and Bust in U.S. Deployments
(OEF (Afghanistan) and OIF/OND (Iraq) in 2000, 2008, 2011, and 2014)

Figure Nine: Creating Afghan Host Country Forces Too Slowly and Without Adequate Resources - II
Rushing Afghan Force Development to Try to Catch Up with the Threat

Token ISAF Troops Relative to Threat Intensity as Late as November 2010

Source: UNDSS March 2010
A Still Massive Gap Between Trainer Needs and Actual Trainers: 2010-2012 -- Compounded by Counting Pledges who are not actually in Country and often never arrive

Figure Ten: U.S. Use of Airpower in Afghanistan and Iraq: 2009-2018 - I
Operation Enduring Freedom: Afghanistan

Operation Freedoms Sentinel: Afghanistan/Resolute Support: Afghanistan

Adapted from material provided by AFCENT (CAOC) Public Affairs – DSN 318-436-1624
Figure Ten: U.S. Use of Airpower in Afghanistan and Iraq: 2009-2018 - II
Air Strikes in Afghanistan: 2002-2017

Source: U.S. Air Forces Central Command
Note: Airstrike indicates one weapon dropped from the air

Operation Inherent Resolve: Iraq and Syria

**Figure Violence in Iraq: 2004-2011**


Note: Data not audited. Totals for December 2011 include data through December 6. “U.S. Surge” denotes period when at least 150,000 U.S. troops were in Iraq.
Iraq Security Forces 2005-2011

After disbanding the Iraqi Army in 2003, the CPA sought to establish modest police forces using Iraqi funding from the Development Fund for Iraq and limited U.S. funding from IRRF 1. It authorized new programs like the CERP and Commander’s Humanitarian Relief and Reconstruction Program to help U.S. commanders respond to the urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction requirements of local populations.

The Iraqi military and police forces expanded rapidly from 2004 to 2006, adapting to the counterinsurgency mission. Their training accounted for more than 40% of U.S.-funded security expenditures, during this period. Importantly, these programs supported ISF counterinsurgency training, with graduates moving out to field operations under the control of the Multi-National Corps-Iraq. To complement the U.S. surge, a recruiting push resulted in a 71% increase in total ISF personnel from the beginning of 2007 through 2008.
### MOD Trained and Authorized Military Personnel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISF Service</th>
<th>March 2008 Trained</th>
<th>May 2008 Trained</th>
<th>Authorized Force Strength</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi Army</td>
<td>180,263</td>
<td>211,826</td>
<td>156,848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Forces</td>
<td>19,750</td>
<td>21,048</td>
<td>15,583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi Air Force</td>
<td>1,370</td>
<td>1,595</td>
<td>2,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi Navy</td>
<td>1,194</td>
<td>1,494</td>
<td>1,893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>202,757</td>
<td>235,963</td>
<td>177,224</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: March data are of March 19, 2008. May data are of May 31, 2008. Authorized force strength numbers are of May 31, 2008. Trained figures include casualties, AWOL personnel, etc.

### Iraqi Security Forces, as of 9/30/2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Assigned Personnel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Defense&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi Army (IA)</td>
<td>205,410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and Support</td>
<td>46,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total MOD</td>
<td>259,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Interior&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi Police</td>
<td>301,286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi Federal Police</td>
<td>43,957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border Enforcement</td>
<td>60,605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil Police</td>
<td>29,411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities Protection Service (FPS)</td>
<td>94,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total MOI</td>
<td>529,259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Forces</td>
<td>4,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>793,289</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Numbers affected by rounding.

Assigned numbers illustrate payroll data; they do not reflect present-for-duty totals.

Source: GOL, MOIIG, response to SIGIR data call, 10/5/2010
Iraq Security Forces Training - SIGIR Lessons

MOD Training

Military program managers spent a total of $1.32 billion to train MOD forces, with more than $850 million of that amount expended by the end of 2008. The build-up of personnel boosted MOD’s cumulative force to more than 200,000. But, as with the police, the number of troops reporting for duty fell continually below desired levels, with AWOL rates exceeding 3% per month. As MOD forces rapidly expanded, senior non-commissioned officer and commissioned officer positions became difficult to fill, with vacancy rates of 30% or more persisting into 2008.

By the end of that year, thanks to a new program to recruit and train officers and NCOs from the Saddam era, almost 100,000 more senior personnel (85% of whom were NCOs) were brought into the Iraqi Army. As the January 2009 transfer of security authority approached, the United States embedded 183 Military Transition Teams at all levels of the Iraqi military to assist units in achieving full capability. After 2009, ISF training comprised a stable, albeit smaller, portion of overall U.S. expenditures. Blanket training orders funded by the ISFF (administered as pseudo-FMS cases) for Iraq’s Army, Navy, and Air Force complemented a wide range of GOI-funded training activities procured through the FMS program.

While significantly more advanced than the MOI at the time of the U.S. troop departure, Iraq’s MOD lacked critical capabilities in logistics, intelligence, and operational sustainment. Weaknesses in counterterrorism and intelligence capabilities at the tactical, operational, and cross-ministry levels impeded collaboration and information sharing throughout the national security framework.

At the end of 2012, Iraq had no fixed-wing combat-air capability to defend its airspace and only a small fleet of littoral patrol vessels to guard its coastline and the vital infrastructure that supports oil exports.

MOI Training

The United States obligated $5.61 billion and expended $5.44 billion on MOI training. Unlike the MOD, which completely rebuilt its force structure, the MOI’s force-base came from the prior regime. But the situation was chaotic in the summer of 2003. Only small numbers of police reported regularly for duty, and under-funded training plans, aggravated by the CPA’s use of threats to try to get police to return to duty, produced few results. Some security personnel, like the Facilities Protection Service, appeared to be little more than a mask for various sectarian and militia elements within ministries.

In May 2004, NSPD 36 assigned the mission of organizing, training, and equipping Iraq’s security forces (including the police) to the U.S. Central Command, which established MNSTC-I to oversee the mission. INL awarded a large multiyear police-training contract in early 2004 to provide police-training advisors for the U.S. program. Although other U.S. agencies and other nations provided additional advisory support, the contract engaged the largest contingent of trainers. State managed the contract for the advisors, providing logistical support, even after Defense took over MOI training in mid-2004. SIGIR auditors determined that INL lacked sufficient personnel to adequately oversee the contract, concluding that $2.5 billion was vulnerable to waste and fraud.


In 2006, Iraqi instructors assumed responsibility for providing most of the academic training for the MOI. MNSTC-I continued to advise and assist at the police training centers, with police training teams supporting police stations. The GOI assumed responsibility for all academic training and most of the advanced training courses by December 2008, with U.S. military and police advisors continuing to provide advice and quality control. The number of recruits usually exceeded the capacity of the police training program, which put a constant strain on the training cycle. The “recruit-to-train” mode prioritized basic training over training for senior personnel in a rush to get police into the field during the
insurgency. Expansion of the Baghdad Police College, which received $96.5 million in IRRF and ISFF funds, increased police training rates in early 2008, reducing bottlenecks.

Police forces under the MOI’s aegis in 2008 totaled approximately 400,000. Facilities Protection Service personnel were formally integrated into the MOI over time, but they served directly under the ministries whose facilities they were assigned to protect. The core police forces—the Iraqi Police, the National Police, and the Department of Border Enforcement—usually incorporated militias that had agreed to be “integrated.” “Ghost employees” (those who received paychecks but did not work) and attrition were significant problems among their ranks. Many police elements within the MOI suffered from corruption and sectarianism, but these afflictions particularly affected the National Police. The NP received priority training and equipping from MNSTC-I, but its force structure had been pieced together from Saddam-era commando units and Shia militias. Accused of frequent human-rights abuses, the NP underwent extensive “re-bluing” (retraining and sifting out) during 2006–2008.

In 2010, when the State Department began planning to take over police training, the actual capabilities of the Iraqi police were still unknown. A SIGIR review of the program in October 2010 determined that no formal assessments of capabilities had ever been made, as was required. State’s original plans for the Police Development Program envisioned an ambitious $2.09 billion effort. In response to SIGIR audits, the findings of an INL review, and the desires of the MOI, State significantly reduced the scope of the PDP, implementing a new program (called PDP 2) in 2012. PDP 2 focuses on, among other things, antiterrorism and organized crime, forensic evidence analysis, information technology, and border security.

In September 2012, some MOI police forces failed to meet minimum operational standards. Only the Federal Police and the Oil Police were assessed as operationally capable. The Iraqi Police, Department of Border Enforcement, and Port of Entry services demonstrated improving technical skills, but MOI security forces generally suffered from funding gaps, weak command and control, and a poor logistics system.

SIGAR, Learning from Iraq: FINAL REPORT FROM THE SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR IRAQ RECONSTRUCTION, March 2013, p. 91-99
In early August 2010, USF-I publicly disputed the GOI’s claim that July 2010 was the deadliest month for Iraqis since 2008. According to USF-I data, 222 Iraqis were killed in July, or less than half the 535 reported by the GOI. These discrepancies could be the result of several factors, including the still-uncertain security situation in Iraq, the smaller U.S. footprint, and the chaotic nature of the Iraqi health care system.

This quarter, the GOI announced that the Ministry of Health will act as lead agency on casualty data, aggregating its own information on Iraqi civilians with information from the Ministry of Interior (for police casualties) and Ministry of Defense (for military casualties). Although it is not clear whether the three ministries have uniform data-collection and reporting processes, USF-I has said that its officers will continue to work with Iraqi mid-level military officials to improve the accuracy of these reports.

Acknowledging the difficulty of gathering timely and accurate information, USF-I’s deputy commander for U.S. Division-Center stated that while he is “pretty comfortable” with the statistics collected by USF-I, they are not likely to be as accurate as they were when the United States had six or seven brigades in Iraq. In September 2010, USF-I began reporting the Iraqi casualty numbers collected by GOI’s Ministry of Health as its key source for Iraqi casualty information.

Note: Data not audited. Totals for December 2011 include data through December 6. “U.S. Surge” denotes period when at least 150,000 U.S. troops were in Iraq.
(As of May 2008) there are 103,000 Sons of Iraq, with an average of 133 men per group. Although most SOI members are under temporary Coalition contracts, 4,353 SOI volunteers are located across Baghdad, Salah Al-Din, Ninewa, and Tameem. There are also approximately 7,000 volunteers for the Sons of Basrah, comprised of Shia who are not part of the SOI program which is mostly Sunni. Funded largely by the Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP), the United States provided $253 million for the SOI program between June 2007 and May 2008.

Challenges facing the program include infiltration by militias or other groups, as well as continued al-Qaeda attacks on SOI members. To offset infiltration, the Coalition employs biometric screening and works with tribal leaders to vet personnel.

Insurgent attacks in 2006 spiked, particularly in western Iraq. While Sunni tribes supported the growth of al-Qaeda in Iraq—the chief catalyst of renewed violence—attacks began to hit local citizens, particularly in Anbar province. This caused some Sunni leaders to seek cooperation with Coalition forces in what came to be called the “Anbar Awakening.” DoD credited these leaders with helping to improve security in tribal areas.

To advance the Awakening, Multi-National Corps-Iraq began to award CERP contracts in June 2007 chiefly to employ Sunnis. The leaders agreed to keep their people off the battlefield in exchange for CERP-funded jobs providing security for buildings, checkpoints, and neighborhoods.

This effort, known as the “Sons of Iraq” program, entailed approximately 780 separate agreements calling for the stationing of almost 100,000 in 9 provinces across Iraq. The sheer number of agreements and personnel involved made this the largest CERP program in Iraq. SIGIR noted in its review of the SOI program that the contracting process, which spent $370 million in CERP funds, was far from transparent. Financial controls were weak, program managers could not tell whether SOI members received their U.S.-funded salaries, and Defense was unable to provide any evaluations of the program’s outcomes.

Iraqi Corruption: SIGAR Final Report


ESTIMATED ISF FORCE STRENGTH, CUMULATIVE, BY QUARTER


Source: SIGIR Quarterly Report, July 30, 2008, Report to Congress, p. 51-56,
Iraq’s Governance: Some Initial Success and a Failed 2010 Election

The Return to Near Civil War After the Failed 2010 Election and Before the ISIS/ISIL/Daesh Invasion

Provinces Where Most Attacks Occurred

Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Ninewa, Salah Al-Din, and Tameem provinces were most frequently attacked.

Reported Civilian Deaths From Violence, by Month, 11/2012–7/2013

UNAMI Data

Iraq Body Count Data

Note: Non-ISF civilian police are included among casualties; Iraq Body Count figures for June and July are provisional. Sources: UNAMI, press releases, various dates, unami.unmissions.org; Iraq Body Count, Database, www.iraqbodycount.org, accessed 8/31/2013.

Adapted from SIGIR, September 2013 Quarterly Report to Congress, Figure 3-1.
Ending the First Round of Fighting in Iraq

Source: SIGIR Quarterly Report, October 30, 2010 Report to Congress, p. 48,

Comptroller Estimate of DoD OCO Costs & Troop Levels in Afghan and Iraq/Syria Wars

1/ Iraq/Syria data is for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF), Operation NEW DAWN (OND), OIR, and follow-on Iraq activities.
2/ Afghanistan data is for Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) and Operation FREEDOM’S SENTINEL (OFS).
3/ Data is for the European Deterrence Initiative (formerly European Reassurance Initiative) and non-war funding, which includes Security Cooperation in FY 2017-2019, and the former Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund in FY 2015 and FY 2016.
4/ Base budget requirements funded in OCO. In FY 2017, this includes Bipartisan Budget Act compliance, congressional base-to-OCO (Title II to Title IX transfers), and congressional adds (Title X base requirements).

Note: Funding levels displayed are enacted amounts and do not reflect budget execution. The FY 2013 level includes a $5 billion downward adjustment from the enacted appropriation due to sequestration.

(26,922 Contractors vs. 15,000 Troops)

The Contractor Bulge: 2008-2018

The Contractor "Bulge" in Afghanistan in 2018

- The distribution of contractors in Afghanistan by mission category are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission Category</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>U.S. Citizens</th>
<th>Third Country Nationals (TCN)</th>
<th>Local Nationals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan Only</td>
<td>26,922</td>
<td>10,128</td>
<td>10,527</td>
<td>6,267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq and Syria</td>
<td>5,323</td>
<td>2,651</td>
<td>2,210</td>
<td>462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other USCENTCOM Locations</strong></td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>7,111</td>
<td>9,810</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>USCENTCOM AOR</strong></td>
<td>49,245</td>
<td>19,890</td>
<td>22,547</td>
<td>6,808</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DoD Contractor Population in Afghanistan FY08-FY18 (by quarter)

- Contractor Posture: Approximately 26,922 DoD contractors supported operations in Afghanistan during 3rd quarter FY18, an increase of 1% from 2nd quarter FY18. Local Nationals comprise 23.3% of total contractor force; 20,655 US/TCN remain to redeploy.

- A total of 2,002 Private Security Contractors (PSCs) were supporting USCENTCOM operations in Afghanistan as of 3rd quarter FY18. See table below for a detailed summary.